

## Ministry of Education Position Paper:

# Assessment

[Schooling Sector]

Ko te Wharangi Takotoranga Arunga,  
a te Tauhuhu o te Mātauranga,  
te matekitenga

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# Foreword

Tēnā koutou katoa

Effective assessment is a key component of quality teaching and essential for raising student achievement. This position paper outlines our vision for assessment.

One of the key roles of the Ministry of Education is to provide Government with policy advice. In order to do this well, it is important that the Ministry has a clear vision of what a successful system looks like and is able to articulate this from an evidenced-based position.

We all want an education environment that encourages and supports our students to do well and succeed. Views will vary about the best way to raise student achievement and improve our education system. By having a clear position on what assessment should look like in our schools, the Ministry is better able to respond with quality advice about proposed policy initiatives.

A current policy focus is the implementation of common standards (*National Standards* and *Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori*). These standards are broad descriptions of expected achievement derived from curriculum achievement objectives. They provide more time-specificity around what students should be aiming for, or beyond, as they move through years 1–8 of their schooling. Our implementation of common standards in New Zealand is very different to that of other countries and is entirely consistent with our vision for assessment, as detailed in this paper.

Unlike standards-based assessment in other countries, our standards do not rely on national testing. Instead there is an emphasis on teacher professional judgments, assessment for learning principles and practice, and the importance of information sharing to support student learning. This is a novel approach when compared with other jurisdictions.

For common standards to contribute to raising student achievement, they must be supported by effective assessment practice. Effective assessment practice uses high quality technical processes. It is also responsive to each student and their unique learning contexts. We already have much to be proud of in our system. However, there is room for improvement.

Our position on assessment will inform and direct our approach to policy review and development of assessment, raising student achievement, and system-wide improvement. It will guide the advice we provide to Government.

I believe it is important to document this position because sharing our vision will contribute to the ongoing process of building integrity, transparency, and coherence in the education system. To maintain a system that promotes quality outcomes for all our students, we need to work together with a shared understanding about what is intended.

Nāku noa

Karen Sewell  
Secretary for Education

## Executive Summary

This paper presents the Ministry of Education's position on assessment. It outlines our vision for assessment and describes what we believe the assessment landscape *should look like* if assessment is to be used effectively to promote system-wide improvement within, and across, all layers of the schooling system.

Documenting the vision is important to the process of building integrity, transparency and coherence into the schooling system and developing support for it from all stakeholders. We share this vision with a view to developing a shared philosophy throughout schooling and building capability throughout the schooling system.

This paper is intended as a high level paper to sit above policy. It will inform and direct policy review and development relevant to assessment, raising student achievement and system-wide improvement. It is *not* a strategy or a policy statement. It *does not* describe in detail how to achieve the ideal assessment landscape. Nor does it discuss possible options for, and costs of, achieving it.

In broad terms, this paper envisages a schooling system which uses assessment effectively at every level of the system to improve both teaching and learning. That is, a learning system in which:

- every student in every school (English and Māori medium) progresses as far as possible and in the most appropriate way possible, according to their own context;
- all participants have a shared understanding of the role assessment plays in learning and are able and willing to both learn from, and contribute to, the process through effective participation within, and between, learning communities.

A wide range of people have a contribution to make. Therefore, the intended audience for this paper is very wide. It includes: parents and whānau, teachers, school leaders, Boards of Trustees, Ministry of Education and other sector agency personnel and the wider assessment community (including iwi groups, advisors, professional learning providers, support services, writers of educational materials, and researchers); all of whom are potential participants in some aspect of effective assessment.

The paper may also be useful to commentators and opinion makers, some of whom choose to access, publish and/or comment on assessment information. It is important, that they understand the nature of the assessment landscape required to promote better learning.

*Section 1* introduces the paper and outlines the New Zealand context. New Zealand is a heterogeneous society with a diverse socio-cultural demographic. It is important that our education system caters for diverse learners. We need to maintain a strong recognition that identity, language, and culture matter if we are to build and maintain relevance of, and engagement with, learning. In addition, there is a need to be responsive to individual student and school community context. As with any student population, there are varying learning dispositions and preferences and differing educational needs. Progress does not look the same for all students.

This paper is predominantly concerned with schooling and, therefore, discusses assessment mainly in the context of *The New Zealand Curriculum*<sup>1</sup> and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*<sup>2</sup>. These documents provide the framework for the design and review of school-based curriculum, te marautanga-ā-iwi and te marautanga-ā-kura by schools, iwi groups and

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<sup>1</sup> For the Years 1-13 in the English medium setting

<sup>2</sup> For the Years 1-13 in the Māori medium setting

kura<sup>3</sup>. Each school and kura decides how best to ensure that teaching and learning is focused on students and on the practices that help the students gain knowledge and skills across the breadth of the curriculum and develop the key competencies identified as important for life-long learning and participatory citizenship. In this way, the local curriculum of each school is shaped in light of particular needs, interests, and circumstances of their students and community.

Additionally, this paper recognises schooling as one stage within a wider framework of learning. It is important that there be a clear sense of continuity and direction so that “as students journey from early childhood through secondary school and, in many cases, on to tertiary training or tertiary education in one of its various forms, they should find that each stage of the journey prepares them for and connects well within the next”<sup>4</sup>. Consequently, we have also been mindful of the curriculum for early childhood education and care, *Te Whāriki: He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa*<sup>5</sup> when writing this paper.

Section 2 of the paper looks more closely at the recent background to our assessment approach in both the English and Māori medium, the process of assessment, and what the key principles and underlying assumptions are which underpin the Ministry’s position on assessment.

For some years now, our approach to assessment has been moving beyond a narrow summative (‘end point’ testing) focus to a broader focus on assessment as a means of improving teaching and learning. This is sometimes referred to as *assessment for learning*. In recent years our assessment strategy in the schooling sector has prioritised support for teachers and schools through the availability of new assessment tools and professional learning targeted at improving assessment capability.

Our strong focus on *assessment for learning* has influenced the way in which we have implemented standards-based assessment. In New Zealand, our approach is very different from that in other countries. We have a deliberate focus on the use of professional teacher judgment underpinned by *assessment for learning* principles rather than a narrow testing regime. Professional judgment about the quality of student work is guided by the use of examples, such as annotated exemplars, that illustrate in a concrete way what different levels of achievement look like.

In the secondary sector, both internal and external assessment, based on clearly documented and exemplified standards, can contribute to the awarding of credits for qualification purposes. In the primary sector, teachers make ‘on-balance’ professional judgements about the quality of student work by weighing up a range of information drawn from multiple sources, both formal and informal. Assessment is standards-referenced. Professional judgments are made in relation to fixed reference points of expected achievement (standards). These are broad verbal descriptions of the literacy and numeracy knowledge, skills and understanding expected at the various stages of primary schooling. There is no national test.

Effective assessment is a key component of quality teaching and learning and it plays an important role in the process of improvement throughout the system. It entails a purposeful gathering of quality student assessment information and the appropriate use of it to *inquire*,

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<sup>3</sup> These documents connect to, and build on, *Te Whāriki: He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa*. *Te Whāriki* is a bicultural curriculum framework for a diverse range of early childhood services, including Māori immersion and Tagata Pasifika. It provides a foundation for ongoing learning to guide the design and review of service-based curriculum appropriate to the context of the individual early childhood service.

<sup>4</sup> The New Zealand Curriculum for English-medium teaching and learning in years 1-13, p.40-42

<sup>5</sup> For early childhood care and education in a diverse range of early childhood services, including Māori immersion and Tagata Pasifika.

*decide, adapt and transform* in order to improve student learning. This is a cyclical process of continuous improvement. Each cycle of *inquiry, decision-making, adaptation and transformation* is followed by a further cycle.

Effective assessment is not only concerned with high quality technical processes in the collection and interpretation of assessment information. It also requires a high level of responsiveness to unique learning and learner contexts. It includes collaborative exchanges of information between participants in a process of reciprocal learning or *ako*<sup>6</sup>.

A key feature of this paper is the insistence that this reciprocal learning process can and should be mirrored between participants both within and between all layers of the system. It has a role to play in classroom practice, professional dialogue, school review and the development of school-based policy and practices, system monitoring and evaluation and review and development of system-wide policy and practices.

Each layer of the system (classroom, school, sector) can use assessment information effectively to improve student learning if it operates as a *learning community*. All learning communities within and across all layers (classrooms, schools, sector) of schooling can contribute to system-wide improvement if they work collaboratively to share information to support student learning.

System-wide improvement is built from the classroom up through a focus on using assessment to make a difference for every child in every classroom in every school. System-wide improvement is enabled from the system-level down through the establishment of an environment which values the contributions of all participants. It requires the consistent application of some key principles within all levels and settings (primary and secondary, English medium and Māori medium) and all layers (classroom, school and sector). These should be modelled from the Ministry and other agencies throughout the schooling sector.

The key principles highlighted and explained in *section 2* of this paper are:

- the student at the centre
- the curriculum underpins assessment
- building assessment capability is crucial to achieving improvement
- an assessment capable system is an accountable system
- a range of evidence drawn from multiple sources potentially enables a more accurate response
- effective assessment is reliant on quality interactions and relationships.

These principles are consistent with the principles for assessment in *Te Whāriki: He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa*<sup>7</sup> and with the principles<sup>8</sup> for, or key

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<sup>6</sup> *Ka Hikitia* defines 'ako' as comprising two important aspects, culture counts plus productive partnerships. It defines 'culture' as being shared understandings, practices, norms and values of a group of people (*Ka Hikitia* - glossary, p.40)

<sup>7</sup> The four assessment principles in *Te Whāriki*, (p.30) mirror the four curriculum principles in *Te Whāriki* (p.14): Empowerment/Whakamana; Holistic Development/ Kotahitanga; Family and Community/Whānau Tangata; Relationships/Ngā Hononga

<sup>8</sup> The principles of assessment in *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* are: worthwhile to the learner, accurate and reliable; assessment supports improved learning; assessment is seen as positive, adding value to learning; each assessment activity has a clear purpose ... and should be valid and relevant to its intended purpose - English translation, p.14 accessed 2 August 2010 at: <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/MaoriEducation/Consultation/TeMarautangaOAotearoa/WhakapakehatiaOTeMarautangaOAotearoa.aspx>:

characteristics<sup>9</sup> of, assessment in *The New Zealand Curriculum* and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*.

Sections 3, 4 and 5 in the paper describe how effective assessment works to improve teaching and learning at each level of the system.

*Section 3* looks at how assessment operates through the interaction of student, teachers, parents and whānau to support improved student learning in the context of a *learning classroom*. It addresses the need for assessment capability in teachers **and** students.

*Section 4* looks at how assessment practices and interactions are managed within each self-managing school so that capability increases and assessment practices across a school contribute to improved student learning in the context of a *learning school*.

*Section 5* looks at how assessment works throughout the sector to contribute to improvement in student learning through a *learning sector* and ultimately a schooling system which has coherence and integrity as a *learning system*. It also looks at the Ministry's role in enabling, guiding and supporting a coherent system which uses assessment effectively and with integrity to improve student learning.

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<sup>9</sup> The characteristics of effective assessment in *The New Zealand Curriculum*, (p.40) are: benefits students; involves students; supports teaching and learning goals; is planned and communicated; is suited to purpose; is valid and fair.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of this Paper

1. This paper presents the Ministry of Education's position on assessment. It shares our vision for assessment with a view to developing a shared philosophy throughout schooling and building capability throughout the schooling system.
2. It describes what the assessment landscape *should look like* if assessment is to be used effectively to promote system-wide improvement within and across all settings and all layers of the schooling system.

### Our Vision

A learning system in which:

- every student in every school and setting progresses in their learning as far as possible and in the most appropriate way according to individual context;
- there is a shared understanding of the role assessment plays in learning;
- all participants are able and willing to both learn from, and contribute to, the learning process through their effective participation within, and between, learning communities.

3. The paper is intended as a visionary statement to sit above policy and to underpin the more detailed advice the Ministry will give, over time, to successive Governments, in relation to policy considerations relevant to assessment and system-wide improvement. While specific policies may change over time, the Ministry's position on assessment should remain the same until such time as new evidence suggests the need for adjustment. It is *not* a strategy or a policy statement. It *does not* describe in detail how to achieve the ideal assessment landscape and it *does not* discuss possible options for, and costs of, achieving it.
4. Documenting the vision is important to the process of building coherence, integrity of purpose, and transparency into the system and developing support from stakeholders. It is not uncommon for mistrust, misinterpretation, or misinformation to arise in relation to new initiatives when intent is not clear. We need to create and sustain a schooling system that enables rather than inhibits the spread of effective practice and encourages and supports all participants to work together as appropriate to their particular role, to improve learning.
5. A shared understanding within the Ministry will ensure that the Ministry is well placed to provide consistent quality advice in relation to assessment-related issues in the context of specific policy considerations into the future. Sharing the paper beyond the Ministry will provide transparency and clarity around intent and promote a shared understanding throughout the sector. In conjunction with the policies and support that it influences, it should contribute to a shift in thinking and practice.
6. In writing this paper, we have taken into account a range of information available to us, including the advice in *Directions for Assessment in New Zealand*<sup>10</sup> and the review

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<sup>10</sup> Michael Absolum, Lester Flockton, John Hattie, Rosemary Hipkins, Ian Reid, *Directions for Assessment in New Zealand (DANZ). Developing students' assessment capability* (Wellington: Ministry of Education, 2009) Accessed 8 March 2010 at: <http://assessment.tki.org.nz/Assessment-in-the-classroom/Directions-for-assessment-in-New-Zealand-DANZ-report> Referred to as DANZ in remainder of this paper



papers that contributed to it. This paper, commonly known as the DANZ paper, was completed in March 2009 and had been commissioned by the Ministry in the context of a review of our assessment strategy.

## 1.2 Audience

7. The intended audience for this paper is anyone who has a contribution to make in learning from and using assessment information to encourage or support better student learning in our schools. This includes: parents and whānau, teachers, school leaders, Boards of Trustees, Ministry of Education and other sector agency personnel and the wider assessment community (including iwi groups, advisors, professional learning providers, support services, writers of educational materials, and researchers) – all of whom are potential participants in effective assessment.
8. In addition, the paper will be useful to commentators and opinion makers. While they do not necessarily have a direct role in contributing to teaching and learning, some do choose to access, publish, and/or comment on assessment information. It is important that those who choose to publish and comment on assessment information understand the nature of the assessment landscape required to promote better learning and have some level of assessment capability. This is important if they are to interpret assessment information accurately and meaningfully and present it in a manner that is appropriate and will clarify and actively support positive outcomes for all.

## 1.3 The New Zealand Context

9. New Zealand is a heterogeneous society with a diverse socio-cultural demographic. It must, therefore, cater for diverse learners. There must be a strong recognition that identity, language, and culture matter. In addition to this, there are varying learning dispositions and preferences and differing educational needs that naturally occur in any student population. Responsiveness to both individual student and school community context is clearly important, as recognised in our national curriculum framework. The national curriculum acknowledges our bicultural foundations and recognises the growing cultural diversity in New Zealand. The national curriculum supports an inclusive approach that recognises the differing “voices” and contexts that New Zealanders bring to learning. It recognises the importance of being responsive to both individual student and community context. It encourages a system where the teaching is made relevant to each student.
10. This paper is predominantly concerned with schooling. For the most part, it discusses assessment in the context of *The New Zealand Curriculum*<sup>11</sup> and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*<sup>12</sup>. However, it also recognises that schooling is one stage within a wider framework of learning. It needs to be connected to, and build on, early childhood learning experiences guided by *Te Whāriki: He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa*<sup>13</sup> and prepare students for life beyond schooling. The national curriculum aims to establish a learning pathway from early childhood, through the schooling sector and, in many cases, on to tertiary training or education, with each stage of the journey preparing the learner for, and connecting with, the next stage<sup>14</sup>. This positions tertiary

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<sup>11</sup> For years 1–13 in the English-medium setting

<sup>12</sup> For years 1–13 in the Māori-medium setting

<sup>13</sup> A bicultural curriculum framework for a diverse range of early childhood services, including Māori immersion and Tagata Pasifika. It provides a foundation for ongoing learning to guide the design and review of service-based curriculum appropriate to the context of the individual early childhood service.

<sup>14</sup> *The New Zealand Curriculum*, p. 42

education as building onto the values, competencies, discipline knowledge, and qualifications that students have gained in the earlier years of their education. It envisages learning that continues into, and throughout, paid employment and future life, with individuals building onto and further developing their capabilities.

11. The national curriculum sets the direction for learning and informs the design and review of each local curriculum. *The New Zealand Curriculum* provides the framework for school-based decision-making in English-medium settings, while *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* provides the framework for iwi-based (te marautanga-ā-iwi) and kura-based (te marautanga-ā-kura) decision-making in Māori-medium settings. Each school<sup>15</sup> decides how best to give effect to these to ensure that teaching and learning practice is focused on helping students gain knowledge and skills across the breadth of the curriculum and develop the key competencies identified as important for life-long learning and participatory citizenship. In this way, the local curriculum of each school, in all settings, is shaped in light of the particular needs, interests, and circumstances of their students and community. This, in turn, guides school-wide assessment policy, processes, and practice. From this, teachers determine their classroom-based curriculum and assessment policy, process and practice to support the national curriculum, within the context of their local curriculum.

#### **1.4 Assessment is an essential component of quality teaching, school and system improvement**

12. It is generally recognised that the most important school-based influence on successful student outcomes is quality teaching. Effective assessment is a key component of quality teaching when it is used as a learning process to inform teaching and learning and improve student learning. An increasing number of teachers exemplify effective practice. We need to extend this further.
13. Effective assessment entails the consideration of a range of information from multiple sources in order to learn and respond appropriately to improve learning. This may include the use of assessment tools and resources. This will contribute to reliable and valid judgments if used appropriately along with skilful interpretation of the information produced. This information will be weighed up against less formal information such as that gathered through observation and conversation.
14. Information learned through reciprocal exchanges between participants is also important. This entails a process of reciprocal learning or ako<sup>16</sup>. For example, at the classroom level of the system, the key participants are students, teachers, parents and whānau all of whom can provide, and learn from, information which will contribute to better learning for the student.
15. Effective assessment is also concerned with the way in which information gathered and interpreted is then used to improve teaching and learning. Information should be used in a way that is responsive to unique learning and learner contexts. It should be used constructively to promote improved learning. This is important if each and every student is to progress in their learning as far as possible and in the way most appropriate to their individual context

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<sup>15</sup> As well as schools that are either English medium or Māori medium, there are some schools within which both settings sit side by side. In 2009, there were 228 schools with both English-medium and Māori-immersion or bilingual classes.

<sup>16</sup> *Ka Hikitia* defines 'ako' as comprising two important aspects, culture counts plus productive partnerships. It defines 'culture' as being shared understandings, practices, norms and values of a group of people (*Ka Hikitia* – glossary, p. 40)

16. However, effective assessment is not the sole province of the classroom. Reciprocal learning can occur, and quality assessment information can be used, within and between all layers of the system to promote improvement in student learning and raise student achievement. It can and should happen at the school level in the context of professional dialogue, school review and the development of school-based policy and practices and, at the system level, in the context of system monitoring and evaluation and review and development of system-wide policy and practices.
17. Achieving coherence and integrity of purpose throughout the schooling system will entail a significant shift in thinking for some. It will require a step-by-step change in practice over time. It will require a high trust and collegial environment where information is freely shared, inquired into, used effectively to decide what needs to be done next and how best to do it and then used to adapt (modify policy and planning, revise goals, targets and success indicators), and implemented in a way that will transform practice to achieve improvement in student learning outcomes.

## 1.5 Content

18. The next sections in this paper outline the following:
  - What the recent background to our assessment approach is and what the key principles and underlying assumptions are that underpin the Ministry's position on assessment (*section 2*);
  - How assessment operates through the interaction of student, teachers, parents and whānau to support improved student learning through *learning classrooms* (*section 3*);
  - How assessment practices and interactions are managed within each self-managing school so that capability increases and assessment practices across a school contribute to improved student learning through *learning schools* (*section 4*);
  - How assessment works throughout the sector to contribute to improvement in student learning through a *learning sector* and ultimately a schooling system that has coherence and integrity as a *learning system*; and the Ministry's role in enabling, guiding and supporting a coherent system that uses assessment effectively and with integrity to improve student learning (*section 5*).

## 2. Assessment

### 2.1 Background

19. For some years now, our approach to assessment has been moving beyond a narrow summative (“end point” testing) focus to a broader focus on assessment as a means of improving teaching and learning. This is sometimes referred to as *assessment for learning*. This broader focus on assessment recognises the role that effective assessment plays when quality assessment information is utilised at all levels of the system to promote improved student outcomes in all settings, English medium and Māori medium.
20. This approach to assessment has strongly influenced the way in which we have implemented standards-based assessment. Our approach is very different from that in other countries. In New Zealand, there is a deliberate focus on the use of professional teacher judgment underpinned by *assessment for learning* principles rather than a narrow testing regime.

### Assessment for Learning

21. *Assessment for learning* has been an area of focus in New Zealand for decades. In 1990, the Ministerial Working Party on Assessment for Better Learning released the paper, *Tomorrow's Standards*.<sup>17</sup> The concept of *assessment for learning* was embedded in the paper, and the paper itself included a set of principles of “assessment for better learning”. These included the following:

*The primary purpose of assessment should be to provide information which can be used to identify strengths and guide improvement. In other words, it should suggest actions which may be taken to improve the educational development of students and the quality of education programmes.*<sup>18</sup>

22. In 1994, the Ministry of Education published *Assessment: Policy to Practice*.<sup>19</sup> This document was a handbook addressed to principals and staff developing school assessment policy. It stated that “... the main purpose of school-based assessment is to improve students’ learning and the quality of learning programmes”.<sup>20</sup>
23. The National Education Monitoring Programme (NEMP) was implemented from 1995 to provide a national “snapshot” of students’ knowledge, skills, and attitudes across the curriculum areas.<sup>21</sup> Except between 1999 and 2005, this sampling has been undertaken in English medium schools only.<sup>22</sup>
24. In 1998, the Ministry of Education published *Assessment for Success in Primary Schools*.<sup>23</sup> This paper recommended that new diagnostic assessment tools be

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<sup>17</sup> Ministerial Working Party on Assessment for Better Learning, *Tomorrow's Standards* (Wellington: Learning Media, Ministry of Education, 1990)

<sup>18</sup> *Tomorrow's Standards*, p. 8

<sup>19</sup> Ministry of Education, *Assessment: Policy to Practice* (Wellington: Learning Media, Ministry of Education, 1994)

<sup>20</sup> *Assessment: Policy to Practice*, p. 7

<sup>21</sup> The National Education Monitoring Programme (NEMP) uses sampling to measure and monitor student achievement by learning area over time on a national basis. It is conducted in cycles, with each learning area repeated every four years to provide a broad picture of students’ abilities across the education sector at years 4 and 8 and provide assurance about the quality of education and provide a means of evaluating progress towards education priorities.

<sup>22</sup> NEMP was implemented in Māori-medium schools in te reo Māori between 1999–2005. However, items for the Māori-medium school sector were direct translations from the English items prepared for English-medium schools. It was discontinued in the Māori-medium setting because it was recognised that it is more appropriate to develop items within a Māori-medium context.

<sup>23</sup> Ministry of Education, *Assessment for Success in Primary Schools* (Wellington: New Zealand Government, Green Paper, 1998)

developed, including additional diagnostic tests, more national exemplar material, new externally referenced tests (comparing performance at national and group levels), and more comprehensive national summary information. It also recommended the National Education Monitoring Programme (NEMP)<sup>24</sup> be modified to provide more detail on the achievement of specific groups of students.

*The key objective of assessment should be to enhance the ability of teachers to address learning needs effectively by monitoring student progress and identifying areas where teaching and learning programmes need to be modified.*<sup>25</sup>

25. A National Assessment Strategy was subsequently introduced in 1999. The strategy supported improved assessment capability in the sector through availability of assessment tools and professional learning targeted at building assessment capability. Since then, new assessment tools have been introduced to the sector, most notably asTTle and e-asTTle in the English medium, and professional learning has been targeted at assessment and its associated pedagogy.
26. Between 2004 and 2009, the Ministry of Education published *Kei Tua o te Pae Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars*, a series of books of exemplars underpinned by an *assessment for learning* focus and the curriculum and assessment principles in *Te Whāriki*. *Kei Tua o te Pae* considers and informs assessment practice in early childhood education<sup>26</sup> and clearly has relevance for primary teaching and learning, especially in the early years as students transition from early childhood into schooling. Following on from this is *Te Whatu Pōkeka: Kaupapa Māori Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars (2009)*<sup>27</sup>, which build on *Te Whāriki* and *Kei Tua o te Pae* to provide exemplars appropriate to a kaupapa Māori context.
27. In 2006, a review of the National Assessment Strategy began. The first phase of the project reviewed evidence regarding how well the current strategy was working. The second phase has been concerned with developing a new assessment strategy. To help facilitate this, the Ministry commissioned a paper providing advice on future strategy for assessment. The resulting paper (2009) entitled *Directions for Assessment in New Zealand (DANZ)*<sup>28</sup> continued to support the focus on *assessment for learning*. However, it highlighted, as a priority, the need "... that all young people should be educated in ways that develop their capacity to assess their own learning".<sup>29</sup> This would require "... assessment-capable teachers, school leaders, and Ministry personnel".<sup>30</sup> It emphasises the importance of building student assessment capability so that students become autonomous learners and lead their own learning. The paper

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<sup>24</sup> The National Education Monitoring Programme (NEMP) uses sampling to measure and monitor student achievement by learning areas over time on a national basis.

<sup>25</sup> *Assessment for Success in Primary Schools*, p. 17

<sup>26</sup> *Kei Tua o te Pae*, Wellington: Learning Media Ltd – Books 1–8 (2004), Book 9 (2005), Books 10–15 (2007), Books 16–20 (2009) – accessed at:

<http://www.educate.ec.govt.nz/learning/curriculumAndLearning/Assessmentforlearning/KeiTuaotePae.aspx>

<sup>27</sup> *Te Whatu Pōkeka: Kaupapa Māori Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars*, Wellington, Learning Media (English Translation) – accessed 2 August 2010 at:

<http://www.educate.ec.govt.nz/learning/curriculumAndLearning/Assessmentforlearning/TeWhatuPokekaEnglishLanguageVersion.aspx>

<sup>28</sup> Michael Absolum, Lester Flockton, John Hattie, Rosemary Hipkins, Ian Reid, *Directions for Assessment in New Zealand (DANZ). Developing students' assessment capability* (Wellington: Ministry of Education, 2009) Accessed 8 March 2010 at: <http://assessment.tki.org.nz/Assessment-in-the-classroom/Directions-for-assessment-in-New-Zealand-DANZ-report> Referred to as DANZ in remainder of this paper

<sup>29</sup> DANZ, p. 5

<sup>30</sup> DANZ, p. 5

also emphasised the requirement for continuous improvement across the whole system, most notably “a system that learns”.<sup>31</sup>

28. A stocktake of Māori-medium assessment resources was undertaken in 2008 along with surveys and interviews about assessment practices and expectations of teachers, parents, and students. This found that in Māori-medium settings, assessment is viewed primarily as a process for informing teachers and school leaders about where learners/students are at so that they can make decisions about the next steps in teaching and learning. For many survey participants, assessment at the classroom level is considered to be the most significant, as it is where the most important shifts and changes occur for students. This highlights the need for quality assessment resources in Māori-medium settings.
29. Some of the English-medium tools have been available in translation in the Māori medium, but it has been increasingly acknowledged that there is a need to support effective assessment practices in our kura through the provision of dedicated Māori-medium resources and support, developed in the context of the kaupapa Māori approach to teaching and assessment. This has been given particular urgency with the upcoming implementation of *Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori*.
30. In 2008, Māori assessment experts began work on *Te Tirewa Mātai*, a framework for monitoring student outcomes in the context of *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*. This work has contributed to the development of *Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori* and the Ministry is continuing to work with these assessment experts to develop a new national monitoring study in te reo Māori in the context of both *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* and *Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori*.
31. With the implementation of *National Standards*, NEMP has again been modified. In 2010 information collected will include information useful to the implementation of *National Standards*. A revised approach to national monitoring in English-medium schools that takes into account the implementation of *The New Zealand Curriculum* and the *National Standards* is being developed.

### **Standards-based Assessment**

32. Our strong focus on *Assessment for learning* has influenced the way in which we have implemented standards-based assessment in New Zealand. Our approach is very different from that in other countries. In New Zealand, there is a deliberate focus on the use of professional teacher judgment underpinned by *assessment for learning* principles rather than a narrow testing regime.
33. In the primary sector, *The New Zealand Curriculum National Standards* for literacy and numeracy and *Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori* for te reo and pāngarau are being implemented, from 2010 and 2011 respectively, for Years 1-8. This implementation is underpinned by *assessment for learning* principles and relies on professional qualitative judgments made by teachers on the basis of what they have learned about a student's achievement and progress across a range of assessment information (both formal and informal) – see [National Standards and Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori](#) below. There is no national test. This is a novel approach when compared with approaches elsewhere in the world.

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<sup>31</sup> DANZ, p. 37

34. In the senior secondary school, norm-referenced qualifications<sup>32</sup> have been progressively replaced with a standards-based approach to assessment and certification<sup>33</sup>. From the mid-90s unit standards began to be used in secondary schools, and from 2002 onwards achievement standards were introduced, in addition to unit standards, and have been used to assess the outcomes of *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Both achievement and unit standards contribute credits to the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA).
35. NCEA standards, *National Standards* and *Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori* each have an important external reporting function based on a “summing up” of where a student’s learning sits in relation to an expected standard. As such this is essentially a summative use of assessment information. However, this information can also be used formatively to support better learning. It is a mistake to view the formative use and summative use of assessment information as separate and opposed (see [Formative and Summative Uses of Assessment Information](#) below).
36. NCEA standards differ from *National Standards* and *Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori* in main purpose, and hence in nature.

#### *National Certificate of Educational Achievement*

37. NCEA standards<sup>34</sup> are concerned with specific learning outcomes within a broader subject area. Each standard describes what a student needs to know, or what they must be able to achieve (skills, knowledge or understanding), in order to meet the standard. Achievement standards are aligned to curriculum levels 6-8. Assessment provides the opportunity for students to demonstrate they have met the standard. Each student’s performance is evaluated against written criteria. These criteria illustrate the properties or characteristics that need to be demonstrated by the student in order to have met the standard and are supported by concrete examples such as annotated exemplars.
38. Formal assessments enable the award of credits towards the completion of a qualification (NCEA level 1, 2 or 3). Each standard has a defined credit value. These assessments can be internal using professional teacher judgments<sup>35</sup> and/or external, usually by means of an end of year examination<sup>36</sup>. Both internal and external assessments contribute credits to the NCEA qualifications. These are high stakes assessments because they influence the decision-making of employers and tertiary institutions and, therefore, influence the future pathways and destinations of the student. NCEA standards are, therefore, primarily assessment tools. They are more specific in nature than Year 1-8 *National Standards* and *Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori*. However, this *does not* preclude, and indeed research shows *should not* preclude, NCEA standards being used to guide and support teaching and learning in

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<sup>32</sup> A norm-referenced assessment is one that has been designed to determine the position of an individual relative to others in a population, with respect to the skills, knowledge and understanding being measured. When combined with a standardised score, it also allows us to track an individual’s progress over time relative to a population – see the *Assessment online Glossary* on the Ministry of Education’s website, *Te Kete Ipurangi* accessible at: <http://assessment.tki.org.nz/Glossary#N>

<sup>33</sup> This type of approach measures a person’s skills, knowledge and understanding with reference to benchmarks of expected performance in relation to a specific competency or body of knowledge appropriate to them. It enables consideration of the quality of an individual’s learning without the need to compare them with other students - see the *Assessment online Glossary* on the Ministry of Education’s website, *Te Kete Ipurangi* accessible at: <http://assessment.tki.org.nz/Glossary#N>

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/qualifications-standards/qualifications/ncea/understanding-ncea/how-ncea-works/standards/>

<sup>35</sup> Skills and knowledge that are not readily tested by examination are usually assessed internally

<sup>36</sup> Most external assessments are by examination at the end of the year. However, for some subjects, e.g. Technology or Visual Arts, students submit a portfolio of their work at the end of year.



the qualifications-focused environment<sup>37</sup> in conjunction with the wider direction for learning in the national curriculum.

39. This wider focus is supported by resources such as the Curriculum Guides, Senior Secondary<sup>38</sup>. These are currently available for the English medium and are to be developed for the Māori medium. Formal assessment should be a component of a wider school-based assessment strategy. This wider strategy uses effective assessment practice as an integral component of a wider teaching and learning programme. It prepares students for NCEA assessment while also ensuring they progress as far as possible in their learning as appropriate to their own individual context.

#### *National Standards and Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori*

40. *National Standards and Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori* describe the literacy and numeracy knowledge, skills and understanding needed by year 1-8 students if they are to fully access, and meet the demands of, *The New Zealand Curriculum* or *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* across all learning areas.
41. Like the curriculum achievement objectives from which they are derived, *National Standards and Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori* provide descriptions of expected achievement. However, unlike the achievement standards, they specifically and definitively link to a period of time (after one / two / or three years at school) or year level (end of year 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / or 8). They provide reference points of expected achievement which can be used nationwide to consider progress and achievement. They describe what students should be aiming for, or beyond, as they move through years 1-8 of their schooling.
42. Assessment in relation to *National Standards and Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori* is standards-referenced<sup>39</sup>. Our approach to the implementation of *National Standards and Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori* has been influenced by the work of D. Royce Sadler.<sup>40</sup> The verbal descriptions are deliberately broad. They are not intended to be used as a test or a check-list. The expected achievement described by these standards encompasses a number of skill and knowledge components.
43. There is likely to be some variation in level of achievement across the range of skills, knowledge and understanding expected by any given standard. No one tool, task, activity, learning conversation or observation will be able to fully provide the information needed across all dimensions of each standard. Also, as these standards are concerned with literacy and numeracy skills needed across the curriculum, it is appropriate that evidence be collected across learning areas.

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<sup>37</sup> Black, Paul & Wiliam, Dylan (2001) *Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards through Classroom Assessment* – accessed 10 December 2009 at: <http://weaeducation.typepad.co.uk/files/blackbox-1.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> <http://seniorsecondary.tki.org.nz/About-the-Senior-secondary-teaching-and-learning-guides>

<sup>39</sup> Standards-referenced assessment utilises verbal descriptions of expected achievement as reference points in relation to which professional judgments about progress and achievement are made. These descriptions are supported by examples, such as annotated exemplars, which illustrate in a concrete way what achievement in relation to the reference points looks like. Together the descriptions and concrete examples guide professional judgments. These judgments take into account a range of information, both formal and informal.

<sup>40</sup> Sadler views standards-referenced assessment as characterised by stable reference points rather than precise and objective measurement on an interval scale (1987, p.196). He uses the term 'standard' to mean: 'fixed points of reference for assessing individual students'. These are described in non numerical verbal terms according to multiple criteria and use the human brain as the primary evaluative instrument (1987, pp.191). Standards-referenced judgments utilise both tacit and explicit knowledge and are qualitative judgments about the achievements of students used both for improving learning and for summative reporting (1987, p.191)



44. Teachers are expected to make professional judgments about student progress and achievement in relation to what is expected by the appropriate standard of reference. These qualitative judgments are termed *overall teacher judgments* because they are 'on balance' judgments made across a range of information and across the range of skills, knowledge and understanding expected at any given reference point<sup>41</sup>. They make use of tacit<sup>42</sup> information held by the teacher as well as a range of explicit<sup>43</sup> information collected by the teacher from multiple sources. This information is considered alongside, and guided by, a verbal description of expected performance and concrete examples which show what different levels of achievement look like.

## 2.2 Effective Assessment Improves Teaching and Learning

45. Assessment is how we check that learning is taking, or has taken, place so that we can decide what needs to happen next. It looks back and it looks forward. It can play a key role in raising achievement and improving student outcomes when undertaken effectively and appropriately and used at all levels of the system.

### Assessment as a Process of Learning, for Learning

46. Assessment can be described as a process of *inquiry*, *decision-making*, *adaptation*, and *transformation*. It is, in effect, a learning process which, if undertaken effectively, can be used to inform teaching and learning. Information is gathered, learned from, and responded to in a way that will make a difference and improve learning. In this sense, assessment is a process of learning, for learning.
- *Inquiry* is concerned with collecting good quality information from a range of sources (including feedback from others), interpreting it, and considering it against previous information and pre-set success indicators. For example, what gains have been made, what strengths are apparent, what weakness or areas for improvement need to be addressed, does progress made match the progress expected? This then leads to *decision-making* informed by inquiry findings.
  - *Decision-making* is concerned with using the full range of information collected to decide what needs to be done next, identify the best way to adjust strategies, and provide informed feedback to others (student, teacher, parent, whānau, school) to support their inquiry process. For example, what should be done next, what approach is likely to be the most effective to further learning (build on strengths and address weaknesses), how best can strategies be adjusted, what feedback needs to be given?
  - *Adaptation* is concerned with following through on the inquiry and consequent decision-making by responding positively and constructively to plan changes or develop new initiatives in line with what has been learned and decided. For example, this may entail adjusting policy and/or practice – modifying planning, revising goals and targets, and determining success indicators for future inquiry, so that strategies can be adjusted accordingly, in practice.

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<sup>41</sup> Sadler (1987, p.193) points out that, for standards-referenced assessment, it is the pattern of performance (the configuration) which is important rather than a totalling up of scores across a range of activities

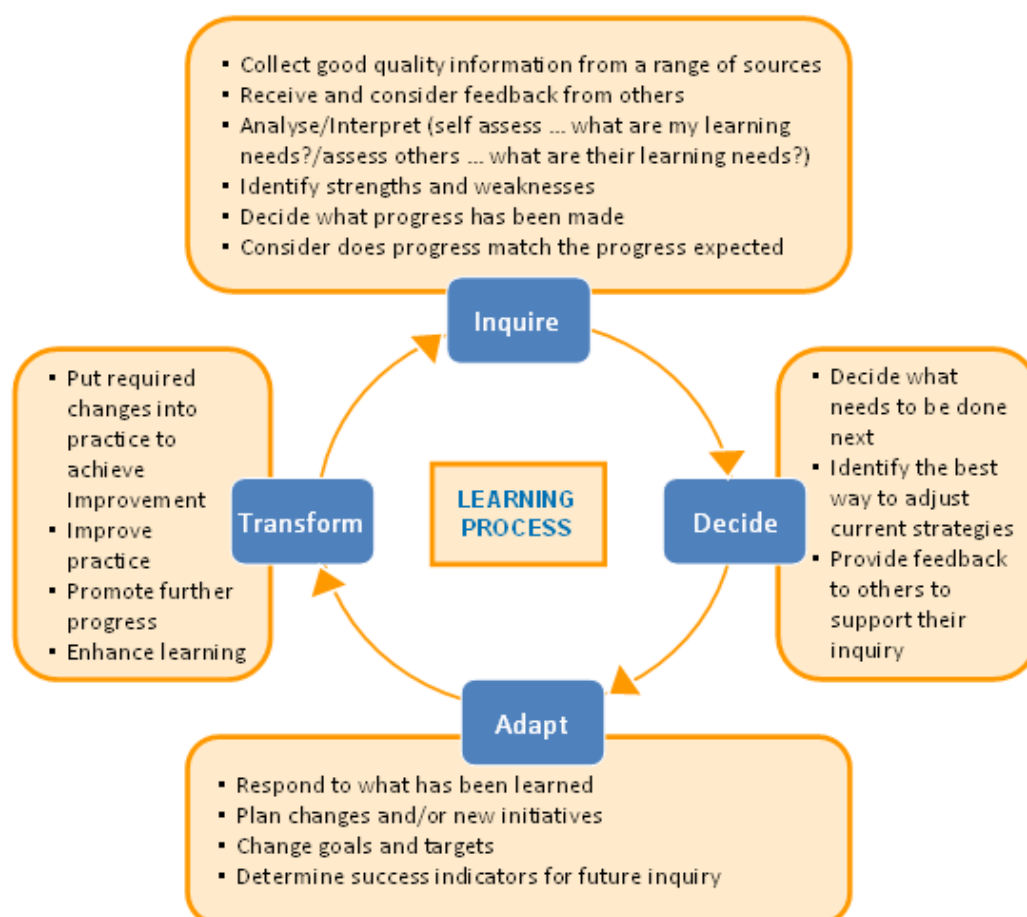
<sup>42</sup> Tacit knowledge is internalised information embedded in personal experience (personal knowledge and insight) accumulated in the context of every day activity, observation, conversation, interaction and association with others (students, parents, colleagues ... ). It includes what Sadler (1989, p.126 ) refers to as 'a form of Guild knowledge'.

<sup>43</sup> Evidence produced from the appropriate and purposeful (sensitive and tailored to context) use of resources (assessment tools/tasks/activities), including specifically structured observations and conversations, to inquire into specific aspects of learning.

- *Transformation* is concerned with putting required changes into practice in a way that will achieve improvement – that is, improve practice, promote progress, and enhance learning.

47. This process will include reciprocal learning conversations. For example, in the classroom context, students, teachers, parents, and whānau can each learn from and contribute to the process and collaborate in the setting of goals, targets, and success indicators to guide further learning.<sup>44</sup>

**Figure 1: Assessment is a Process of Learning, for Learning**



48. This learning process of *inquiry, decision-making, adaptation and transformation* is a cyclic process of continuous improvement. Each transformation leads to a further process of *inquiry, decision-making, adaptation, and transformation*.

49. Effective assessment is concerned with the use of high quality:

- technical processes (e.g., using assessment resources and interpreting assessment information appropriately to make reliable and valid judgments about progress and achievement so that decision-making is accurately informed), and

<sup>44</sup> The education of assessment capable learners is emphasised in the early childhood education sector as well – see *Kei Tua o te Pae*, Book 4 ‘Children contributing to their own assessment’ (2004) – can be accessed at: <http://www.educate.ece.govt.nz/learning/curriculumAndLearning/Assessmentforlearning/KeiTuaotePae.aspx>

- responsiveness to unique learning and learner contexts (e.g., social and cultural dimensions, learning preferences, strengths and weaknesses) to build and maintain relevance of, and engagement with, learning.
50. Assessment can be used both formatively and summatively. Both uses are inquiring into the same thing (student learning) and there should be a positive link between them with both being used in some way, at some level of the system, to *inquire*, *decide*, *adapt*, and, ultimately, *transform* learning.

### Formative and Summative Uses of Assessment Information

51. Sometimes assessment is referred to as being either “formative” or “summative”. The formative use of assessment information is an important part of everyday practice. It is a diagnostic process concerned with identifying achievement and progress and strengths and weaknesses in order to decide what action is needed to improve learning on a day by day basis. If assessment is to be truly formative, it is important to follow through on what is learned during the inquiry with adjustments that *transform* practice and improve learning. This has been referred to as transformative assessment.<sup>45</sup>
52. The summative use of assessment is concerned with “summing up” achievement at a specific point of time. However, these summations can be used not only to ascertain level of achievement at a specific point of time but also to look back and consider what progress has been made over a period of time compared with expected progress. This information can then be used as a basis for formal reporting or for meaningful and reciprocal learning conversations between teachers, students, parents and whānau about progress made, what next steps are appropriate, and how future learning can best be supported. In other words, it can be used formatively at the individual classroom level. In addition, this “summing up” can contribute information to individual, school-wide and system-wide inquiry and be used formatively to improve policy and practice towards better learning.
53. While the summative assessments derived from formal National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) assessments are of particular interest to tertiary institutions and employers, they can also be used formatively. For practical reasons, it is more difficult for teachers to use the end-of-school-year external assessments formatively with their students. However, it is notable that all papers are returned to students. Students are able, if they choose, to consider what their result means in terms of what they need to do next in order to make progress into the future. In an ideal “assessment capable” world (see [Building assessment capability is crucial to achieving improvement](#) below), students may choose not only to consider their returned papers themselves but also to discuss them with past or future teachers to consider what this might mean for next steps in the following year. The DANZ report noted that the broad structures of the NCEA are consistent with the vision of students playing an active role in assessing their own learning and achievement.<sup>46</sup>
54. Summative information drawn from NCEA-related internal and external formal assessments can also be used formatively to inform school-wide and system-wide policy and practice with the aim of improving assessment practice

It is important that all assessment is used at some level of the system to improve

<sup>45</sup> Popham, W James, *Transformative Assessment*, (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Alexandria, Virginia, USA, 2008)

<sup>46</sup> DANZ, p. 38

and process, improved student engagement, and better learning.

student learning.

55. The design of the NCEA is such that it provides potential for assessment to be used formatively and to be an integral part of teaching practice in preparing students for formal certification. The DANZ report notes that “*it is a strength of NCEA, that students are assessed when ‘ready’—when both teachers and students believe that the desired learning has taken place*”.<sup>47</sup> Assessment activity undertaken in the context of the wider teaching and learning programme leading up to formal assessments (internal and external) should be formative in nature to ensure that students progress in their learning as far as possible, and in the best way possible, prior to undertaking formal NCEA assessment.
56. Assessment activity leading up to formal NCEA assessment, in combination with day to day observations and classroom interaction, produces a wider range of evidence than formal testing alone. This contributes to the professional judgments teachers make about what needs to happen next and how best to improve student learning. This, in turn, feeds into student-teacher-parent reciprocal learning conversations and formal reporting to parents. In this way, there can be a positive link between the formative and summative uses of assessment which may include, but also go beyond, the formative use of formal testing.
57. Whether assessment information is used on a day-by-day formative basis or used summatively at specific points in time, it is inquiring into the same thing (student learning) and can be used formatively, at some level of the system, to improve learning. There should be a positive link between the formative and summative uses of assessment information, each contributing to the process of *inquiry, decision-making, adaptation* and *transformation* in order to improve student learning. This should apply throughout the education sector, including the senior secondary school, where the added focus on summative assessment for the purpose of certification adds complexity to the assessment landscape.
58. What is important is that all assessment is used, at some level of the system or other, to improve student learning. If it isn't, it is not worth doing. If it is, then it is *assessment for learning*.

Assessment not used formatively at some level of the system is not worth doing.

### Learning Classrooms, Learning Schools, Learning Sector = Learning System<sup>48</sup>

59. When assessment is used as a process of learning, for learning – that is, to inform teaching and learning as a key component of quality teaching – its effective interaction with teaching and learning makes it a key contributor to improved student achievement.
60. System-wide improvement is contingent on the effective collection and use of quality assessment information at all levels of the system – classroom, school, sector agencies. All levels of the system, throughout the education sector, English medium and Māori medium, can use quality student assessment information to *inquire, decide,*

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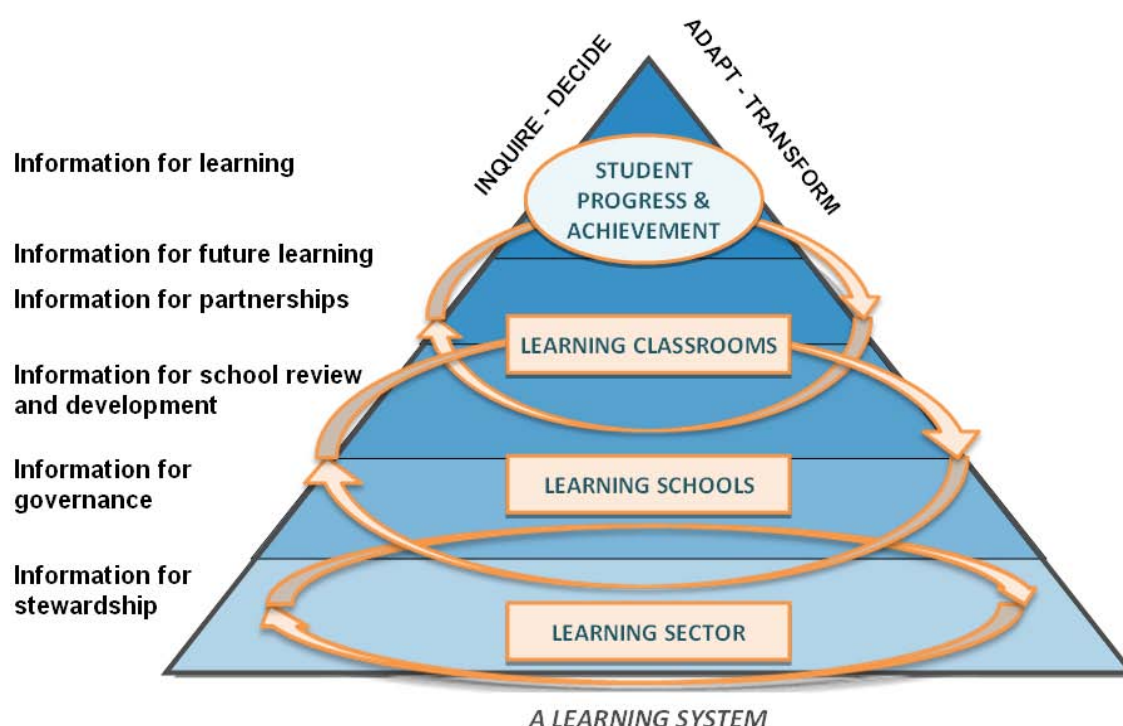
<sup>47</sup> DANZ, p. 38

<sup>48</sup> In the context of this paper that is: a schooling system in which there is system-wide use of a range of information to inform a cycle of continuous improvement – a system that learns.

*adapt* and *transform* to improve student learning and contribute to system-wide improvement.

61. For classroom learning (teacher, students, and parents and whānau) to take place, it must be supported by schools that function as learning communities. Learning schools require a learning sector. Success and innovation within each layer of learning depends on the collaborative actions of multiple participants. To be effective, this relies on the establishment of quality relationships and interactions between participants who have a shared understanding about the role of assessment in improving student outcomes, understand their role in this, and undertake their role as active and willing participants.

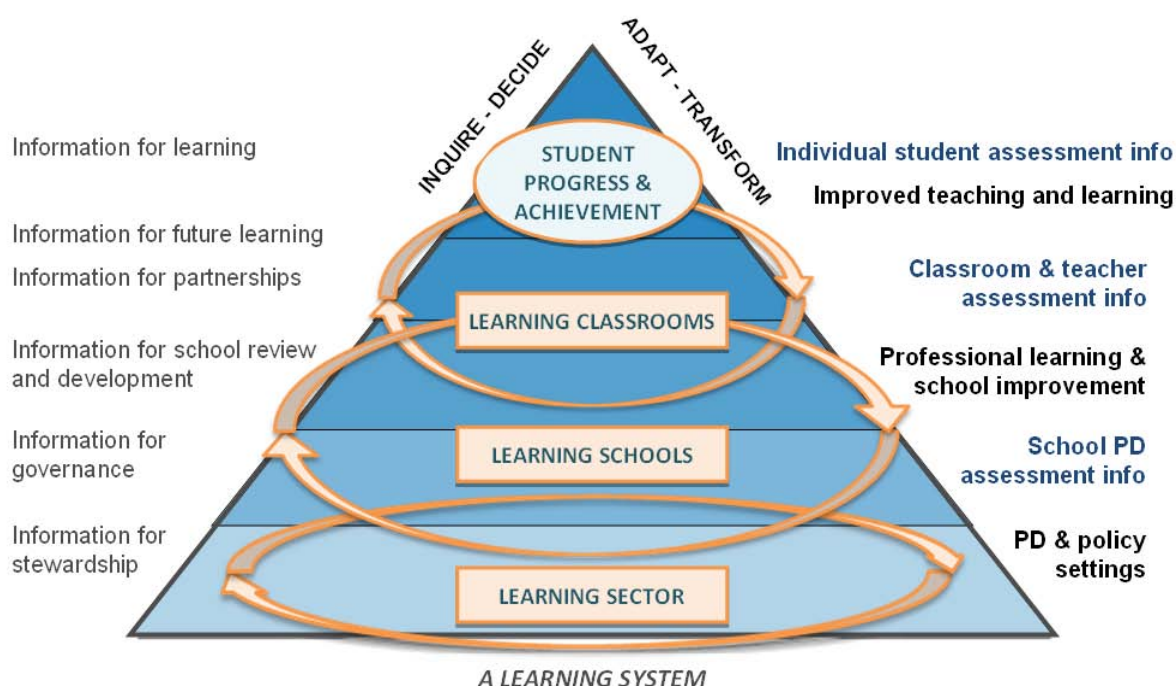
**Figure 2: Schooling System = a Learning System**



62. **Learning Classrooms:** Assessment information on the progress and achievement of individual students contributes to improved teacher learning, student learning, and parent and whānau learning. It enables reciprocal learning conversations between teachers, students, and parents and whānau as part of the inquiry process. It guides decision-making so that what is learned from the inquiry can be responded to in a way that will encourage and support student learning.
63. **Learning Schools:** Assessment information enables professional discussions between teachers (between learning classrooms) guided by school leaders and, when aggregated at school-level, enables school leaders and boards of trustees to review policies, programmes, and priorities for the school (school review) and plan professional learning and development. It guides decision-making so that what is learned from the inquiry can be responded to in order to encourage and support teaching and learning.

64. **Learning Sector:** Information about student performance coupled with priorities identified by schools contributes to the ability of sector agencies to decide how best to co-ordinate available support, provide appropriate advice, and make informed policy decisions and allocate resources effectively. Sector agency decision-making is also influenced by advice received from the wider assessment community, including iwi groups, researchers, and professional learning providers.

**Figure 3: Assessment Information in a Schooling System which Learns**



## 2.3 Raising Student Achievement – Towards System-wide Improvement

### Underlying Assumptions

65. Our ability to raise student achievement and improve student outcomes across all of schooling is likely to be maximised if we focus on using assessment to make a difference for *every* child in *every* classroom in *every* school. This is a student-centred approach to improving student outcomes. If *every* student in a school is progressing as far as possible and in the most appropriate way possible, according to their own context, then the school's performance will be improving as far as possible and in the most appropriate way possible. When *every* school is doing this, the system will be improving as far as possible and in the most appropriate way possible.
66. In order to build system-wide improvement from the classroom up, the environment (system-wide, school, and classroom) needs to enable improvement. Improvement can be encouraged when each level of the system clearly values the contributions of all participants.

System-wide improvement is built from the classroom up but enabled from the system-level down.



## Key Principles

67. System-wide improvement requires a transformative change if all students are to have the best opportunity possible to realise their full potential. This requires a coherent schooling system in which all participants use assessment effectively and with integrity for the benefit of *each and every* student.
68. While system-wide improvement is built from the classroom up, it requires the consistent application of some key principles within and across system layers – classroom, school, and schooling sector.

### Key Principles

- The student is at the centre
- The curriculum underpins assessment
- Assessment capability is crucial to improvement
- An assessment capable system is an accountable system
- A range of evidence drawn from multiple sources enables a more accurate response
- Effective assessment is reliant on quality interactions and relationships.

69. The following sections outline the key principles that we consider important. The implications of these principles for each layer of the system are considered more fully in sections 3 to 5 of this paper.
70. These principles are consistent with the principles for assessment in *Te Whāriki: He Whāriki Mātauranga mō ngā Mokopuna o Aotearoa*<sup>49</sup> – empowerment<sup>50</sup>, holistic development<sup>51</sup>, family and community,<sup>52</sup> and relationships<sup>53</sup> and with the principles for, or key characteristics of, assessment in *The New Zealand Curriculum* and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* (see below). They should be modelled from the Ministry and other sector agencies down.

### The student is at the centre

71. Achievement and progress are described in terms of a number of curriculum-based shared expectations (see [The curriculum underpins assessment](#) below). These are intended as a guide to teaching and learning and they provide a context for professional judgments. Some descriptors, such as progressions, represent a series of small steps and therefore are very specific; others, like the *National Standards* and *Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori*, are much broader indicators of what might be expected at specific points in time.
72. While these shared expectations provide a common focus to guide interactions and decision-making within classrooms, schools and sector, it is important to remember that progress does not look the same for all students. Students will each have their

<sup>49</sup> Te Whāriki, p. 30

<sup>50</sup> Empowerment (Whakamana) is concerned with reciprocal learning between adults and children, building children's sense of themselves as capable people and competent learners, and empowering children to play an active role in assessing their own learning.

<sup>51</sup> Holistic development (Kotahitanga) recognises the importance of having a comprehensive view of a child's learning and utilising observation and conversation, as well as specific assessment activities, to capture all dimensions of learning, including those that are less easily measured.

<sup>52</sup> Family and community (Whānau Tangata) is concerned with building meaningful partnerships with families and whānau that utilise reciprocal exchanges of information for the benefit of student learning.

<sup>53</sup> Relationships (Ngā Hononga) focuses on the interactions between adults and children and the importance of reciprocal learning and the awareness of adults of their own beliefs, assumptions, and attitudes and the influence these can have on a child's learning.

own unique way of learning as reflected in their differing strengths and weaknesses and in differing learning preferences. In addition, students will vary in terms of the socio-cultural context and world view (identity, language, and culture) they bring to their learning. If students are to fully engage with, and progress in their learning, assessment must be responsive to student context.

73. It is important that policy and practice, at all levels of the system, encourage and enable an inclusive approach that recognises and responds to diversity (differing backgrounds, experiences, culture, educational need). At the same time, there needs to be a firm belief that, given appropriate support and guidance, all students can progress in their learning.

“As an education system, we must get away from the concept of failure of Māori learners, to how the system can and will maximise Māori potential. The system has to change to meet the needs and interests of learners rather than learners having to change for the system.”<sup>54</sup>

74. The aim is to shift progress as far as possible and in the best way possible according to the context of each individual student.

75. The interactions that students have with their peers, teachers, parents, and whānau are also important to the process of improved learning. Schools and teachers have a key role in shaping these interactions and in encouraging partnerships with families and communities that utilise reciprocal exchanges of information for the benefit of student learning.

“Learners and teachers need to establish effective relationships which focus on student learning ... Each learner has different and unique ways of learning.”<sup>55</sup>

76. However, all learning relationships and interactions operate within socio-cultural contexts. Schools and teachers need to be able to understand and mediate these so that they can play a positive and constructive role in encouraging and participating in responsive, respectful and reciprocal learning conversations that focus on the student at the centre.
77. In addition, to understand and cater for the unique context of individual students, it is important that students be educated in ways that develop their capacity to assess their own learning so that they can develop as autonomous, self-regulated, life-long learners.

### ***The curriculum underpins assessment***

78. In order to achieve valued student outcomes, it is important that we assess what we value rather than narrow our focus to value what we assess. As such, all assessment practice (*inquiry, decision-making, adaptation and transformation*) should be consistent with *The New Zealand Curriculum* and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*.

<sup>54</sup> *Ka Hikitia, Managing for success*, p. 10. Accessed 15 April 2010 at:

<http://www.minedu.govt.nz/~media/MinEdu/Files/TheMinistry/KaHikitia/English/KaHikitia2009PartOne.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> English translation of *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*, p. 12. Accessed 15 April 2010 at:

<http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Curriculum-documents/Te-Marautanga-o-Aotearoa>



79. *The New Zealand Curriculum* and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* set the direction for learning in English-medium and Māori-medium schooling respectively. This includes essential learning areas and key competencies needed for life-long learning and participatory citizenship and principles for, or key characteristics of, assessment.

80. Assessment practice should support teaching and learning in multiple ways to ensure students gain the knowledge and skills they need to access the learning areas across the breadth of the curriculum, develop the key competencies, and have a learning pathway that leads to worthwhile future destinations – employment or tertiary study.

81. *The New Zealand Curriculum* and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* include achievement objectives relative to curriculum levels of learning across the learning areas.<sup>56</sup> These are supported by indicators of progressions, such as the literacy learning progressions<sup>57</sup> and the Number Framework<sup>58</sup> in the English medium (years 1–10).

82. *The New Zealand Curriculum* is also supported by senior secondary specialist learning objectives (New Zealand Curriculum Guides Senior Secondary).<sup>61</sup> Similar guides are planned to support *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*. These assist teacher assessment decisions and provide the basis for success indicators that benchmark students' learning progress for assessment purposes.

83. Achievement standards (for NCEA) are developed from the curriculum achievement objectives or the additional specialist learning objectives in the New Zealand Curriculum Guides Senior Secondary and outline quite specific requirements that need to be met for certification purposes.

84. The year 1–8 *National Standards* and *Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori* sit between the achievement objectives of the curriculum and indicators of progression. Like the indicators of progression, they have more time-specificity than the achievement

***The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC)***  
**– Effective assessment:**<sup>59</sup>

- benefits students,
- involves students,
- supports teaching and learning goals,
- is planned and communicated,
- is suited to the purpose,
- is valid and fair.

***Te Marautanga o Aotearoa - principles of assessment***<sup>60</sup>:

- worthwhile to the learner, accurate and reliable;
- assessment supports improved learning;
- assessment is seen as positive, adding value to learning;
- each assessment activity has a clear purpose ...assessment should be valid and relevant to its intended purpose.

<sup>56</sup> *The New Zealand Curriculum*, opposite p. 44 and English translation of *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa*, p. 20 onwards

<sup>57</sup> See Literacy learning progressions at: <http://literacyonline.tki.org.nz/Literacy-Online/Student-needs/Literacy-Learning-Progressions>

<sup>58</sup> See: <http://nzmaths.co.nz/new-zealand-number-framework>

<sup>59</sup> *The New Zealand Curriculum*, p. 40

<sup>60</sup> *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* – English translation, p. 14 accessed 2 August 2010 at: <http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/MaoriEducation/Consultation/TeMarautangaOAotearoa/WhakapakehatiaOTeMarautangaOAotearoa.aspx>

<sup>61</sup> <http://seniorsecondary.tki.org.nz/About-the-Senior-secondary-teaching-and-learning-guides>

objectives because they are pegged to specific years (years at school/year level). However, like the achievement objectives, the year 1–8 standards are broad descriptions of learning expectations – they do not have the specificity of the indicators of progression.

### ***Building assessment capability is crucial to achieving improvement***

85. The process of *inquiry, decision-making, adaptation, and transformation* is a continuous process of improvement guided by a shared understanding across the system of what we want to achieve and how best we can achieve it. People who have well developed assessment capability are “able and motivated to access, interpret and use information from quality assessments in ways that affirm or further learning.”<sup>62</sup> This entails having the required *knowledge*, the *skill* to use that knowledge effectively, and the *disposition* to actively utilise the skills and apply the knowledge. For teachers, effective assessment is a crucial component of quality teaching and requires assessment, curriculum, and pedagogical knowledge.
86. Effective assessment requires a significant step up in assessment capability across the sector. All involved (students, parents and whānau, teachers, school leaders, boards of trustees, the wider assessment community, and sector agency officials) need to be assessment capable. While the knowledge and skills needed will vary depending on the role the various participants play in the process, building the assessment capability of all participants is crucial to achieving improvement across the system for all settings in the schooling sector.
87. Commentators and opinion makers do not necessarily have a direct role in contributing to teaching and learning. However, if they choose to access, publish, or comment on assessment information, it is important that they have some degree of assessment capability. For example they should, at the very least, understand the nature of the assessment landscape required to promote better learning and be able and motivated to interpret the information accurately and meaningfully and present it in a manner which is appropriate and will contribute to positive student outcomes rather than potentially mislead or do harm.

### ***An Assessment Capable System is an Accountable system***

88. Student outcomes are dependent on a number of factors and do not always accurately reflect the extent of the contribution made by the various participants or the extent to which any real learning has taken place. In the classroom context, “when true learning has occurred, it will manifest itself in performance. The converse does not hold ... mere performance on a test does not necessarily mean that learning has occurred. Learners can be taught how to score well on tests without much underlying learning.”<sup>63</sup>

“when true learning has occurred, it will manifest itself in performance. The converse does not hold.”<sup>64</sup>

89. Similarly, at the aggregated level, the combined learning of all students will manifest itself in aggregated student performance information, but aggregated student performance information will not necessarily show that the best learning possible has

<sup>62</sup> DANZ, pp. 5,19, 20-21

<sup>63</sup> *Position Paper on Assessment for Learning*, Unpublished paper, Third International Conference on Assessment for Learning, Dunedin, New Zealand, March, 2009

<sup>64</sup> *Position Paper on Assessment for Learning*, Unpublished paper, Third International Conference on Assessment for Learning, Dunedin, New Zealand, March, 2009

occurred. Aggregated information on its own does not indicate anything about the quality of teaching, the extent to which a school is making a difference for its students, or the extent to which it is supporting the learning for each and every student in the school. For this reason, comparisons between schools, solely on the basis of aggregated student information, are misleading.

90. It is important that outcomes be considered in context and in light of progress being made. Effective assessment will not only contribute to improved student outcomes, it will contribute to achieving the best outcomes possible.

It is important that outcomes be considered in light of progress made.

91. Assessment-capable people understand the assessment process and actively seek to gather appropriate information and learn from it so that they can respond to it and use it to support further learning. They assume responsibility for effective policy and practice because self regulation (internal accountability) is a key consequence of being assessment capable. Assessment-capable participants are active in a cycle of continuous improvement. They take responsibility for their policies and processes and are accountable for their professional practices.

***A range of evidence drawn from multiple sources potentially enables a more accurate response***

92. System-wide improvement is contingent on the effective collection and use of quality assessment information at each layer of the schooling system – classroom, school, sector agencies. All layers of the system can learn from assessment information and then respond to that information in a way that will improve student learning.
93. At the classroom level, a range of evidence drawn from multiple sources is necessary in order to compile as comprehensive a picture as possible about each student and their unique way of learning. Assuming that there are quality technical processes (e.g., appropriate use and effective interpretation) and quality responsiveness (taking into account unique context when deciding what should happen next), this enables a more accurate response. In this way, goals, targets, and success indicators can be determined, progress monitored, interventions made, and new goals, targets and success indicators set. With appropriate collaboration and sharing of information, this can occur at all layers of the system (similar to the individual student learning and assessment process) to support system, school, and classroom improvement and, ultimately, improved student learning.
94. While the focus is slightly different for each layer of the system, the essential elements of effective assessment are the same. Evidence needs to be collected from a range of sources to determine where performance sits, what this tells us about progress made, effectiveness of current practice, and areas requiring attention (*inquiry*). This enables decisions to be made about what should be done next in terms of what is the best way to achieve further progress, what feedback should be given, and what adjustments/new initiatives are needed (*decision-making*). This can then be used to plan for change and revise success indicators (*adaptation*) and followed through by adjusting practice to promote improvement (*transformation*).

***Effective Assessment is reliant on Quality Interactions and Relationships***

95. Critical to the success of the learning system is:
- the extent to which those who have information to contribute are encouraged to contribute and feel that their input is valued

- how information is collected, interpreted and used and the extent to which those who contribute information feel that their input is valued.
96. A wide range of people have a contribution to make to improving student learning. It is important that people be encouraged to share the information they have whether that be in the context of learning conversations with students and/or with their parents and whānau or in the context of professional dialogue between teachers. It is also important that participants feel that their input is valued.
97. The extent to which information collected is useful and/or used positively and constructively to build and support learning communities is, to a large extent, a function of the quality of the interactions and relationships of the participants and the consequent impact this has on the interaction between assessment, learning, and teaching.

### ***Relationships***

*Responsive - Respectful - Reciprocal*

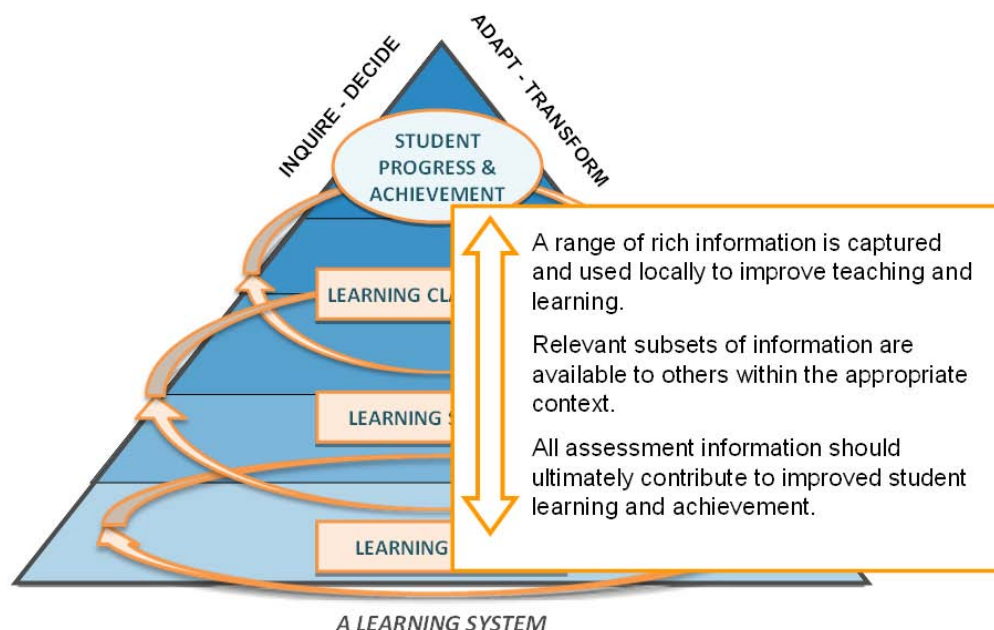
98. Responsive, respectful, and reciprocal learning-focused relationships are fundamental to enabling better learning because of the link between relationship and the motivation required to engage with learning. This is true of all assessment-related relationships but is particularly critical for the relationship between student and teacher and the consequent interaction between assessment, teaching, and learning that occurs in the classroom. For learning conversations and professional dialogue to be productive, they need to be responsive, respectful, and reciprocal exchanges within an environment that values and supports collegial, collaborative, and co-operative interactions.

### ***Interactions***

*Collegial – Collaborative - Co-operative*

99. Assessment information is gathered at each level of the learning system and subsets of this are data disseminated to the next levels to support learning across the system. As a result of analysis, interpretation, and reflection on this information, adaptation to increase learning effectiveness is facilitated across the system, both independently at each level and in concert across the whole sector (the learning system). The process of teacher inquiry for assessing the effectiveness of teaching and providing an impetus for continuous improvement is replicated throughout the education system so that improvement can occur from school through to the sector agencies, encompassing all other parties involved (e.g., professional learning providers, the assessment community, and iwi groups).

**Figure 4: Information gathering and sharing**



100. It is important that information is freely shared and that participants work together in a collegial, collaborative, and co-operative way towards the common goal of improving student learning for all students. It is important that participants be able to differentiate between the type of information they can rely on (quality information about student learning, which can be used to improve student learning) and information that on the surface may appear to say something about learning but is, in fact, misleading.
101. The non-inhibited sharing of quality information requires transparency and trust. In a transparent, high-trust environment, participants can have confidence that the information they share will be used only for the purpose for which it is collected or purposes for which it is suitable. They have a shared understanding of expectations and the role they play in contributing towards improvement, and they know that their participation is valued for the contribution it makes.

## 2.4 Issues and Opportunities

102. New Zealand has much to be proud of in its education system. Our students are achieving in reading, mathematics, and science on average at a high level compared with the best nations across the world. The highest achieving students in New Zealand are also comparable to the best in the world. However, there are issues that indicate that a substantive change in practice is required.<sup>65</sup>
  - *Inconsistency in outcomes within each school.* There is, in general, more variation with respect to student outcomes within schools than between schools. New Zealand has a wide spread of achievement in reading compared with other highly achieving countries, and this spread of achievement is wide within individual schools.

<sup>65</sup> Strategic Direction, Ministry of Education Statement of Intent (2009)  
<http://www.minedu.govt.nz/theMinistry/PublicationsAndResources/StatementOfIntent/SOI2009/4StrategicDirection.aspx>

- *Not all students in our schools are being sufficiently (effectively) engaged in the learning process.* For example, although some Māori and Pasifika students achieve at a very high level, Māori and Pasifika students achieve, on average, less well than their Pakeha and Asian peers. New Zealand also has the largest gap in achievement in the OECD for English Language Learners (ELL). There is also variability in the extent to which students with special needs are being engaged in the learning process across the school system.
  - *The interaction between assessment, teaching, and learning varies both within and between schools.* Effective assessment is a key component of quality teaching. However, not all school leaders and teachers understand the key role assessment plays in affirming and furthering learning or how to use it effectively in their day to day teaching.
  - *Variable quality of assessment data.* There is a wide variation in the quality and usefulness of assessment data collected by schools. Information that does not contribute to improved learning is sometimes collected, while information that is needed to support improved outcomes is not collected.
  - *Systems are not learning quickly enough.* Systems – whether at the school or wider sector-level – are not learning rapidly enough to address the changes faced by our students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century world.
103. The best way to achieve system-wide improvement is to ensure that we have a system which has both coherence and integrity. This requires a substantive change. There are significant opportunities for our school system.
- *Building assessment capability and an understanding of the importance of evidenced-based decision-making.* Effective assessment requires an ability and willingness to work together collaboratively as a learning community to contribute to a continuous cycle of improvement. This entails sharing, collecting, interpreting, and using quality information guided by a shared understanding of what we want to achieve and how best we can achieve it. Using an evidence-based approach should not be prescriptive – practice should continue to be shaped by context.
  - *Being innovative and trying new things.* A willingness to be innovative and do things differently can strengthen the evidence base for system-wide improvement. This is especially so if participants are willing to share their experiences of what works and doesn't work and learn from each other in the context of a shared goal of enabling system-wide improvement for the benefit of each and every student.
  - *Increased awareness of ICT.* Technology continues to change how our students relate to the world and to each other, and how they learn. Extensive use of computers and mobile communication devices in everyday life is in general more common for our students than it is for the generation of teachers and school leaders entrusted with their education. There is an opportunity to use the increased awareness of ICT in our students and the investment in ICT in schools to radically enhance our assessment processes, the information gathered, and how it is accessed and used. However, this is not without its challenges because new technology tends to be dependent on changes in physical surroundings and new infrastructural requirements. Potential ICT opportunities include (but are not limited to):

- regular in-classroom use of web and network resources as a core teaching tool to enhance engagement with students and learning;
- increased use of online assessment tools such as Progressive Achievement Tests (PAT) and the electronic version of Assessment Tools for Teaching and Learning (e-asTTle) to provide earlier assessment information and more powerful analysis of this information;
- more sophisticated repositories for assessment data in schools that will support a fuller and more rapid diagnosis of school, classroom, and student issues and therefore a more tailored, timely, and effective response;
- e-portfolios including assessment information that travel with a student through their life at school and beyond;
- more direct parent and whānau access to what their child is doing and how they, as parents, can assist;
- increased ability for students to follow self-regulated learning, changing the student-teacher relationship.

104. We need to address the issues and grasp the opportunities if all students in all schools are to progress in their learning both as well as possible and in the best way possible.

### 3. Learning Classrooms

**Learning teachers + learning students + learning parents = learning classrooms**

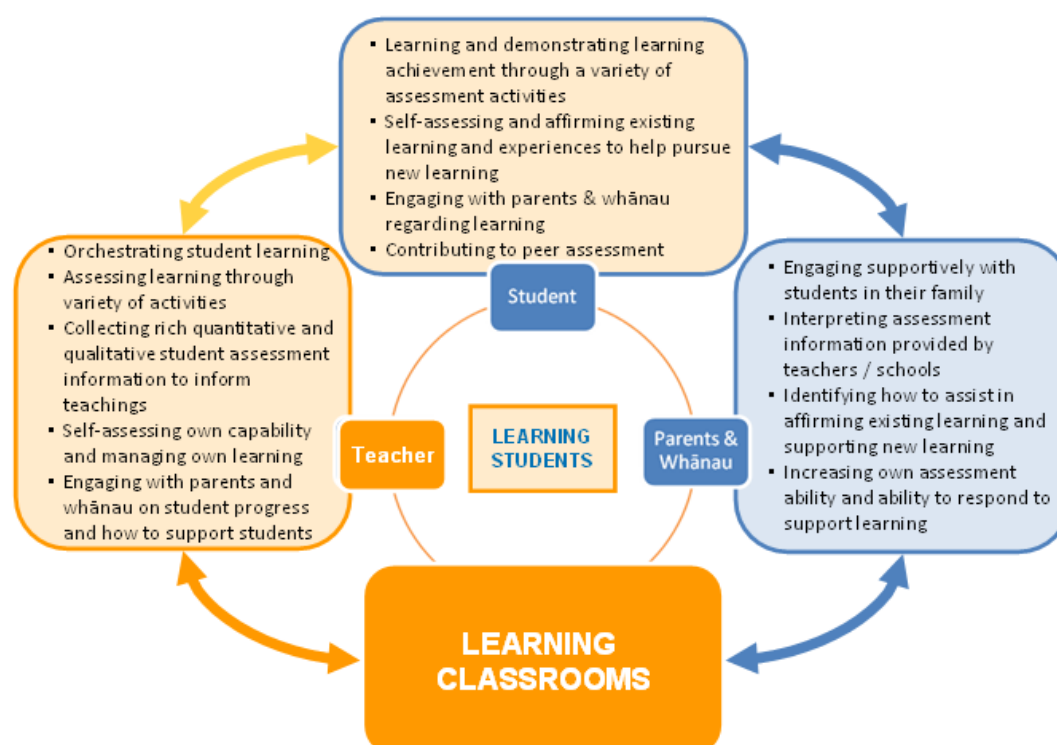
Key elements of a learning classroom:

- quality interactions and relationships that are student-centred and respect and support diverse backgrounds, experiences, and need;
- a recognition of each student's identity, language, and culture in authentic learning situations;
- a continuous process of inquiry, decision-making, adaptation, and transformation undertaken by assessment-capable participants who understand their role in the learning process and whose contribution is valued;
- decision-making guided by a range of evidence from multiple sources;
- a recognition that the curriculum underpins assessment and that this should be reflected in the interaction between assessment, teaching, and learning.

#### 3.1 Overview

105. Learning classrooms are classrooms that support and encourage a community of learning for the benefit of each and every student.

**Figure 5: Roles in a Learning Classroom**

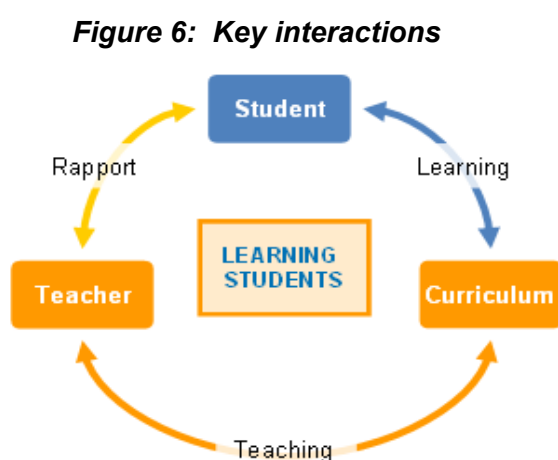




106. The key contributors to learning classrooms are teachers, students, parents and whānau. These contributors need to maintain close dialogue, share information and work together if students are to be fully supported in their learning. The interactions students have with their peers, teachers, families and whānau are important in the process of improved learning. Teachers have a key role in shaping these interactions and in encouraging reciprocal conversations with parents and whānau.
107. To assist transition to school in the early years of schooling, learning conversations between primary teachers, early childhood teachers, and parents and whānau could also be useful to ensure that continuity and connection between the foundational stage of the student's educational journey and early schooling is realised.

## 3.2 Students and Teachers

108. Effective teaching and learning in the classroom relies upon the relationship between:



- the teacher and the student (rapport);
- the teacher and the curriculum (teaching); and
- the student and the curriculum (learning).

The effective use of assessment to *inquire, decide, adapt, and transform* can strengthen these relationships. Recognition that the curriculum underpins assessment should be reflected in the interaction between assessment, teaching, and learning in the classroom.

109. Students should be encouraged and supported to be involved in all aspects of their learning including setting goals, developing success criteria and exemplars, self and peer assessment, reflecting on their learning, identifying what they are doing well and why, and considering what they need to do next to further their learning. Self-aware students can provide better information to their teachers.

“... students need to be actively involved in helping their teachers ascertain what they have learned, what their strengths are, and where their gaps may be.”<sup>66</sup>

110. All students should be educated in ways that develop their assessment capability within and across all learning contexts. Assessment-capable students are able to actively participate in assessing their own learning, recognise important moments of personal learning, and make ‘what next?’ decisions.
111. Assessment-capable students are more likely to take ownership of their own learning and become independent learners. It is important that all students build their assessment capability and develop into autonomous, self-regulated life-long learners.

<sup>66</sup> DANZ, p. 6

School is a critical part of a student's learning pathway, but it should also equip students to learn beyond the formal education context.

112. Day-to-day interaction between students and the system is the province of teachers. There are no easy answers to "What works in the classroom?" as this inevitably depends on context. Research supports models of pedagogy based on teacher inquiry: a model in which teachers reflect on the impact of their actions on student outcomes. Effective assessment is a core part of this process.

113. Teachers must be assessment capable in order to: guide and support their students to build capability; establish a community of learning within their classroom; and engage meaningfully with parents and whānau to empower them to contribute. Like students, teachers who are assessment capable are more likely to take ownership and control of their own learning as teachers, recognise and acknowledge areas for improvement, and take steps to improve their teaching.

Teachers need sophisticated assessment skills if they are to identify what:

- their students know and can do
- further learning they themselves need.

Assessment of this kind cannot take place outside of the teaching/learning process – it is integral to it.

Teachers therefore need a variety of ways of assessing their students' progress, ways that include, but go beyond, standardised testing.<sup>67</sup>

114. The nature and quality of the interactions between teacher and student are key to how effective any learning will be. However, all learning relationships operate within socio-cultural contexts. Teachers need to be able recognise the "voice" of their students and their families to make the connection between each student's own experiences and the learning process. To do this, teachers also need to recognise their own cultural context and how this influences the way they interact and respond.

115. We know that good teaching practice will result in good learning and measurable student achievement. In the classroom, teachers are the "orchestrators, encouragers, interpreters, and mediators of learning."<sup>68</sup> Effective teachers will support students to become assessment capable, autonomous, self-regulated learners. As we seek to develop assessment capability in students, we need teachers who are knowledgeable about the curriculum and assessment and have the skills needed to use their knowledge constructively.

116. Teachers need to know and understand how to gather, interpret, and use good quality information effectively, within each relevant curriculum area. To provide effective learning opportunities, teachers also need to understand the curriculum, its goals, how students can progress towards them, and what can be expected of students at specific points throughout their schooling. Teachers' curriculum and pedagogical knowledge tells them about what needs to be taught, how students learn it, and what this means for their teaching practice. Their assessment knowledge tells them how to obtain good quality information about progress made and achievement reached in order to decide

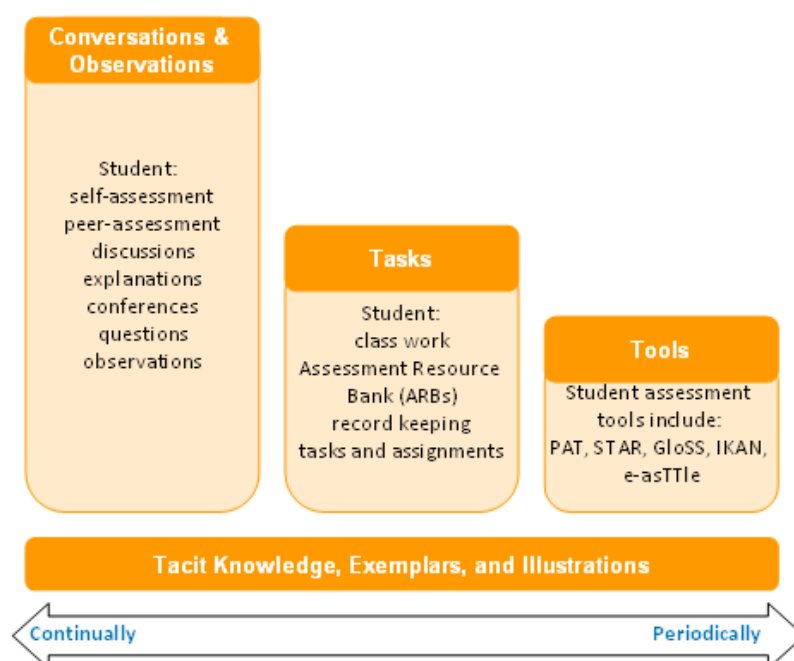
<sup>67</sup> Ministry of Education (2007) *Teacher Professional Learning and Development: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration* Wellington. Accessed at <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2515/15341>

<sup>68</sup> DANZ, p. 24

what next steps are needed for each student. To be assessment capable, teachers need *assessment, curriculum* and *pedagogical knowledge*.

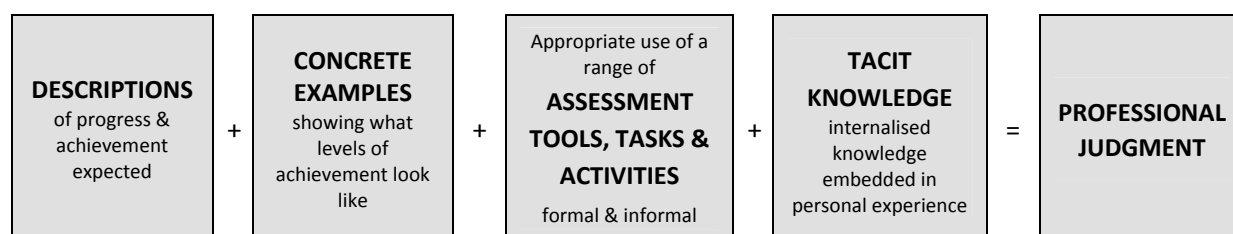
117. Teachers need the *skills* and *disposition* necessary to translate this knowledge into effective teaching practice and the provision of quality learning opportunities for each student. Knowledgeable and skilful teachers will be able to interpret a range of information (from both formal and informal contexts) and act on that information to adjust teaching practice or classroom planning in a way that will enhance learning.
118. Teachers use concrete examples, such as annotated exemplars and other illustrations, to guide the qualitative judgments they make about student work. However, a teacher's conception of quality is "caught"<sup>69</sup> through experience (as they make qualitative judgments over time within the classroom or in collaboration with colleagues) and internalised as tacit knowledge.
119. Teachers also need the disposition (appropriate attitude and motivation) to make a difference for each and every student. This requires an inclusive approach that both recognises the specific context of the student and responds with the firm belief that, given the right support and guidance, all students can progress in their learning.
120. Effective assessment requires teachers to notice, recognise, and respond quickly within the framework of the inquiry process. Good teachers will use their expertise and experience to see beyond the immediate issues and inquire into the underlying issues requiring attention. The mindsets of teachers and students have been, and will continue to be, influenced by new technology that enables experimentation, multimodal content, information foraging, social practice, and growing capacity for collaboration.

**Figure 7: Assessment tools and activities**



<sup>69</sup> Sadler, 1989, p.135

121. A variety of assessment approaches and activities should be used. Approaches and tools will be chosen to collect a rich and reliable picture of student achievement that supports strategies to improve achievement. The bulk of these are likely to be directed-learning conversations and observations. Students will self- and peer-assess while discussing, explaining, observing, and questioning.
122. Using documented conversations and observations as artefacts to be revisited (learning stories) can be useful, particularly in relation to dimensions of learning that are dispositional and complex, such as Te Āhua o ā tātou Ākonga and Ngā Waiaro<sup>70</sup> and key competencies.<sup>71</sup> In this regard, teachers may find *Kei Tua o te Pae*<sup>72</sup> a useful resource.
123. Periodically, specific assessment tasks will provide data on “where a student is at”. For example, at the primary-level in the English medium these could include Assessment Resource Banks (ARBs), running records, National Education Monitoring Tasks (NEMP), and other activities. At specific points in the school year, tools will be used to provide more formal quantitative assessment.
124. Teachers will need to use a mix of assessment tools and activities to inform professional judgments of “where a student is at” and “what needs to happen next”. Different approaches are valid for different purposes and have different levels of reliability. Validity relates to the appropriateness of the inferences, uses, and consequences that come from assessment.<sup>73</sup> Reliability is concerned with the extent to which an assessment is consistent in measuring what it sets out to measure.<sup>74</sup>
125. Professional judgments should take account of a range of activities and be guided by descriptions of what is expected and concrete examples of what various levels of achievement look like. This should result in an assessment that is dependable and useful to inform next steps for learning.



<sup>70</sup> *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* – English translation, pp. 3, 7, accessed 2 August 2010 at:

<http://www.minedu.govt.nz/NZEducation/EducationPolicies/MaoriEducation/Consultation/TeMarautangaOAotearoa/WhakapakehatiaOTeMarautangaOAotearoa.aspx>

<sup>71</sup> *The New Zealand Curriculum* (p. 12) describes key competencies as “more complex than skills” ... drawing also “on knowledge, attitudes and values in ways that leads to action. They are the key to learning in every learning area” The early childhood sector has been grappling with the assessment of key competencies for some time in the context of ‘learning dispositions’, a key domain of the learning outcomes described in *Te Whariki*. *Te Whariki* describes learning dispositions as “encouraged not taught” (p. 44) – see also *Kei Tua o te Pae Assessment for learning: Early Childhood Exemplars* – Books 1, 10, and 16 – <http://www.educate.ecce.govt.nz/learning/curriculumAndLearning/Assessmentforlearning/KeiTuaotePae.aspx>.

<sup>72</sup> *Kei Tua o te Pae Assessment for learning: Early Childhood Exemplars*, includes documented conversations and observations as artefacts that can be revisited (learning stories) – in relation to key competencies, see Book 10 –

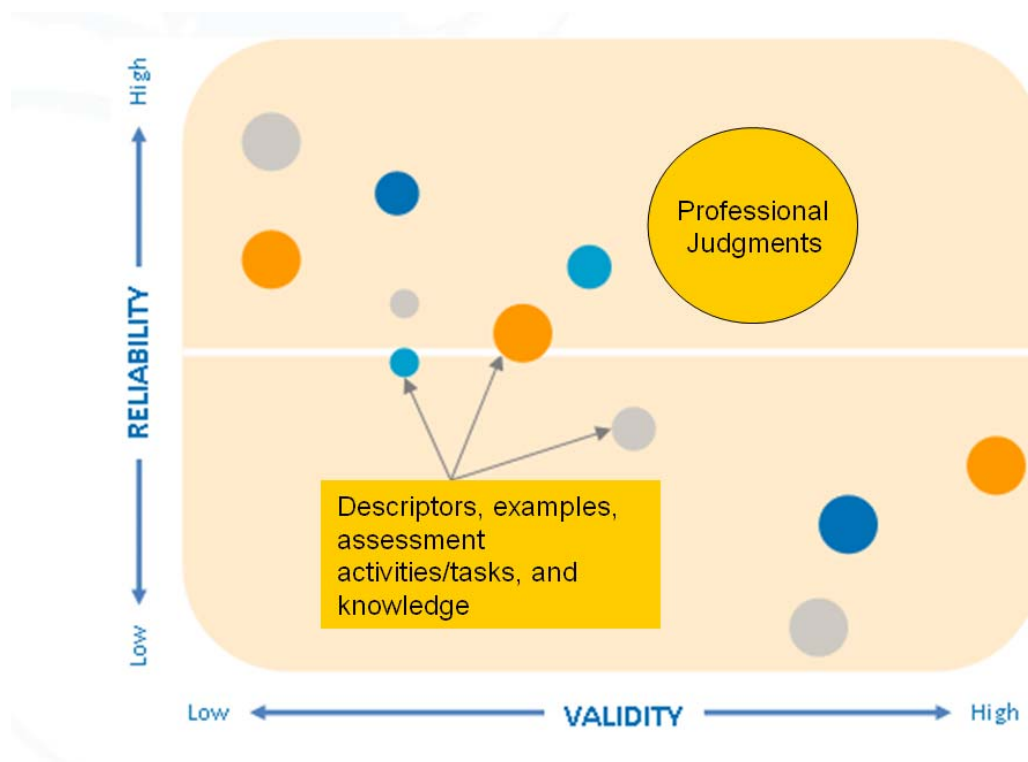
<http://www.educate.ecce.govt.nz/learning/curriculumAndLearning/Assessmentforlearning/KeiTuaotePae.aspx>. The concept of learning stories has also contributed to the development of a narrative assessment guide to support *The New Zealand Curriculum Exemplars for Learners with Special Education Needs* – [http://www.inclusive.org.nz/throughdifferenteyes/a\\_guide\\_for\\_teachers](http://www.inclusive.org.nz/throughdifferenteyes/a_guide_for_teachers).

<sup>73</sup> That is, is the information being used appropriate to purpose – does it inquire into what we intended to inquire into, does what the information tells us support the inferences we have made and form an appropriate basis for the decision we have made? – see Danz, p. 33

<sup>74</sup> That is, the extent to which an assessment would produce the same results if repeated across time and situations – see the *Assessment online Glossary* on the Ministry of Education’s website, *Te Kete Ipurangi* accessible at: <http://assessment.tki.org.nz/Glossary#N>

126. A dependable assessment has both high validity and reliability.

**Figure 8: Validity and Reliability of Professional Judgments**



### 3.3 Parents and Whānau

127. Parents and whānau who are assessment capable are able to engage in meaningful learning conversations with their child and their child's teacher and understand the assessment information they receive in the context of plain language reporting about their child's progress and achievement. They know how to support their child's learning, and why it is important that they do so. They should feel able to contribute information based on their knowledge of their child in what should be a reciprocal exchange of information aimed at improving student learning.<sup>75</sup>
128. Teachers play a key role in translating their expert knowledge into plain language information for parents so they feel able and motivated to contribute to their child's learning. They need to develop quality relationships with parents and whānau of their students so that existing learning can be affirmed and new learning can occur not just in the classroom, but outside of the school context. Parents and whānau need information about the status of their child's learning, the progress made, how well their child is progressing compared with what can reasonably be expected, the future learning priorities and what next steps are needed to further learning, and how they

<sup>75</sup> The important role that parents and whānau play in the in assessment is reflected in the key principle "Family and community" in *Te Whariki* The Early Childhood Curriculum (p. 30). This focus on building meaningful partnerships with families and whānau that utilise reciprocal exchanges of information for the benefit of student learning continues to be an important focus for schooling.

can best use the information they receive from their school to support the learning of their child.

129. Parents and whānau should receive trustworthy and meaningful information about their child's achievement and progress so that, together with the teacher and child, they can identify aspects to celebrate and aspects needing attention. They need to feel empowered to be active participants in the learning process. They may need guidance about how their input can assist, rather than work against, the learning of their child. This information should be shared as part of a dialogue in which parents and whānau are able to share with the school their own knowledge of their child's interactions and feel that their contribution is valued. To encourage this dialogue, schools should provide information that is clear, contextualised, and that will benefit student and parent motivation.
130. While students will become the primary means of facilitating this information flow, schools should provide information that can act as a record of learning showing both progress and achievement, and can follow the student through their years at school.

**Learning Classrooms are classrooms where:**

- all students are able and motivated to self-assess and manage their own learning;
- individual learning pathways for students respect and support their differences and motivations;
- increased student achievement outcomes are linked to improved *assessment for learning* practices;
- teachers use a variety of assessment activities and rich assessment information to affirm learning and provide direction for future learning;
- teachers reflect on their own practice and increase their assessment capability to support student learning;
- parents and whānau receive meaningful assessment information and are encouraged and supported to evaluate and use this information to support their child's learning as active participants in that learning.
- teachers consider learning conversations with their students, parents, and whānau as reciprocal exchanges and value the insights they provide.



## 4. Learning Schools

**Learning classroom + school leaders + boards of trustees = learning school**

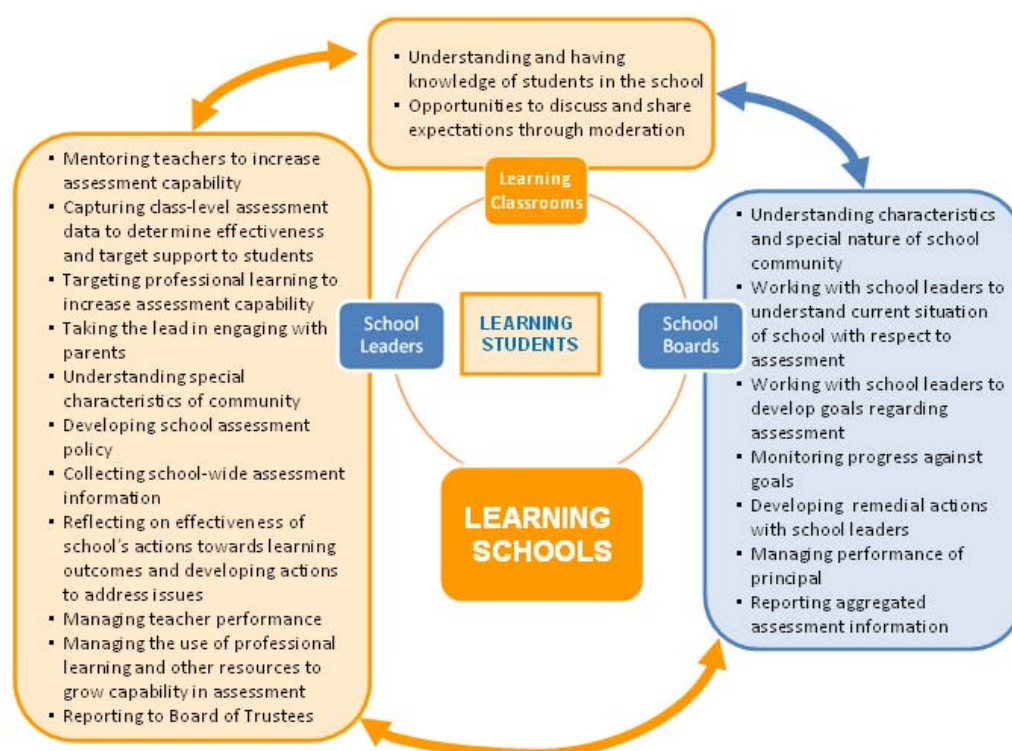
Key elements of a learning school:

- quality interactions and relationships that are student-centred and respect and support diverse backgrounds, experiences, cultures, and need;
- a continuous process of inquiry, decision-making, adaptation, and transformation undertaken by assessment-capable participants who understand their role in the learning process and whose contribution is valued;
- decision-making guided by a range of evidence from multiple sources;
- a recognition that the curriculum underpins assessment and that this should be reflected in the interaction between assessment, teaching, and learning;
- participants model organisational learning.

### 4.1 Overview

131. Learning schools comprise interconnected learning classrooms (teachers, students and their parents) that work together with their school leaders and Board of Trustees to support and encourage a school-wide community of learning for the benefit of each and every student. The key contributors to building and sustaining a learning school are school leaders and the school Board of Trustees.

**Figure 9: Roles in a Learning School**



## 4.2 School Leaders

132. The school leadership is concerned with the management and professional leadership of the school as a learning community.<sup>76</sup>
133. A component of this is the contribution leaders make to building and sustaining the learning classroom within the school in the context of their pedagogical leadership. Day-to-day supervision and mentoring of teachers should include advice and support regarding the use of assessment tools and activities as part of the overall teacher inquiry process. They also lead evidence-based professional discussions and assist teachers to build their assessment capability. School leaders should ensure their teachers interact with each other to share information, model practice and learn from each other. In this way, they promote the sharing of effective practice within their school so that teachers can learn from one another.
134. School leaders should manage the purposeful collection of classroom-level assessment data. This will contribute to understanding the effectiveness of classroom teaching and how the assessment capability of teachers can be enhanced. It is important that school leaders see further than surface practice and reflect on what the assessment information is actually saying. “Knowing how to teach” should be underpinned by “knowing why it works”.
135. While teachers appreciate practical techniques to try out in their classrooms, they also need to understand why these techniques work to enhance learning. School leaders need to support teachers to develop their teaching practices and understanding about learning in concert.
136. School leaders should lead engagement with parents and whānau to develop reciprocal exchanges and enable behaviours that will support student achievement. If schools do not provide leadership in how parents and whānau can support their child, well-meaning parents may inadvertently undermine achievement.
137. School leaders should facilitate a teaching and learning culture that encourages a free exchange of information within the community, an open identification of issues and a willingness to actively work together to improve outcomes. The nature and quality of the interactions between school leaders and their school community are key to how effectively members of the community work together to share their knowledge and skills and model effective practice for the benefit of all students.
138. School leaders must be assessment capable in order to effectively manage their school as a learning community and recognise where support, guidance, or resources need to be targeted. Professional learning required to build the assessment capability must be more than attending training. Professional learning must be integrated into ongoing support and mentoring to improve practice and be cemented into the schools organisational culture through regular and constructive professional discussion.

“Knowing how to teach” should be underpinned by “knowing why it works”.

School leaders must be assessment capable in order to effectively manage their school as a learning community and recognise where support, guidance or resources need to be targeted.

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<sup>76</sup> Ministry of Education (2009) *School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why Best Evidence Synthesis*



139. The student population in each school reflects the community from which it comes, and this in itself might be quite diverse and encompass a variety of backgrounds. School student populations will differ according to a number of factors, including socio-economic, language and ethnicity. This will require careful and considered decision-making about an appropriate approach as each school seeks to encourage and support its student population in effective learning. The need for different approaches will be reflected in the choice of assessment approaches and assessment tools and activities that each school makes. The leaders in a school therefore need to ensure that they manage assessment in a way that works for their particular school in light of the make-up of their student population.
140. Each school should have an assessment policy that includes guidelines on:
- how assessment connects to the curriculum;
  - objectives of assessment;
  - overall approach to *assessment for learning* and, where applicable, ensuring this underpins learning for qualification purposes;
  - approaches to gathering assessment information (informal and formal), including purpose-built tools and activities;
  - planning for assessment in the classroom;
  - processes for moderation;
  - specific requirements for teachers' use of assessment;
  - reporting to parents and whānau;
  - performance management and capability development.
141. Moderation is an integral part of any effective assessment practice. However, the nature of it is dependent on use and purpose. For example, NCEA assessments that directly result in the award of NCEA credits require high levels of reliability so that the national integrity of the NCEA qualifications can be assured. This is achieved through a range of moderation processes: pre-moderation of assessment tasks, teachers co-marking, and submission of marked work for external moderation. However, where the main purpose of assessment is to improve learning through the provision of feedback and reporting to improve student learning, it is more appropriately undertaken in the context of a less prescribed moderation process. Such moderation processes are sometimes referred to as consensus or social moderation<sup>78</sup> and are concerned with promoting evidenced-based professional discussion that builds

Sustained improvement depends on teachers developing professional, self-regulatory inquiry skills so that they can collect relevant evidence, use it to inquire into the effectiveness of their teaching, and make continuing adjustments to their practice.

Teachers with these crucial self-regulatory skills are able to answer three vital questions:

*"Where am I going?"*

*"How am I doing?", and*

*"Where to next?"*<sup>77</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Ministry of Education (2007) *Teacher Professional Learning and Development: Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration* Wellington. Accessed at: <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2515/15341>

<sup>78</sup> Claire Wyatt-Smith; Val Klenowski; Stephanie Gunn *The centrality of teachers' judgement practice in assessment: a study of standards in moderation*, on line publication date: 4 February 2010 - Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice at: <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713404048>

confidence and consistency in professional judgment and contributes to shared expectations and building assessment capability.

142. School leaders, in consultation with their teachers and parent and whānau community, develop their assessment policy and ensure that its implementation and operation is monitored. If the assessment policy is to be truly effective, it should be aligned to the requirements of the school student population and inform, in straightforward terms, the assessment practice of the school.
143. The availability of rich and usable assessment data from across the school is an important step in ensuring strong assessment practices. School leaders should model the *inquiry, decision-making, adaptation, and transformation* process at the school-level: collaborate to set goals, make interventions, assess school-wide progress, and then set new goals and adjust strategies as necessary. Reflection on assessment information gathered across the school enables the school strengths and improvement opportunities to be identified. School leaders can then manage changes to teaching practices and ensure that professional learning resources are well utilised.
144. Each school should develop its own approaches to gathering, interpreting and using information focused on improving assessment practices. These should be appropriate to the context of the school and its students. The information collected should be sufficient to enable school leaders to reflect on where the assessment strengths and weaknesses are within their school.

Interpretation and reflection on the assessment information gathered will result in specific activities to address concerns and build on strengths to ensure that assessment validity and reliability increases and that assessment is truly “*assessment for learning*”.
145. When considering school-wide performance, school leaders should draw on a range of information in the same way that teachers do in relation to individual performance. Interpretation and reflection on the assessment information gathered will result in specific activities to address concerns and build on strengths to ensure that assessment validity and reliability increases and that assessment is truly “*assessment for learning*”. Good practice in this area will result in greater consistency of assessment use across the school and increased assessment capability among teachers.
146. The performance of teachers should be actively supported. Reflection on the information gathered will support school leaders in targeting professional learning where it will achieve the most impact on individual student outcomes. Ongoing support, supervision and mentoring of teachers are important to enabling effective assessment to become part of daily practice in all classrooms to benefit learning for each and every student.
147. Wider reflection across the range of information available and consideration of the impact of changes previously made are important components of the inquiry process. As they engage with the process of school review, school leaders should be committed to a path of continuous improvement, ask focused questions and work in an iterative manner. This can then lead to informed decision-making about appropriate next steps. These decisions should then be followed through with evidence-based changes that are likely to promote improvement.

### 4.3 Boards of Trustees

148. A Board of Trustees is concerned with the governance of its school as a learning community and should work with school leaders to engage parents and whānau in contributing to school improvement. An assessment-capable board governs its school in a way that will enable an effective learning community to flourish and an evidenced-based improvement-focused culture to be maintained. Boards should understand the needs of the school student population and work with the school leaders to ensure school policy and practice meet these needs.

An assessment-capable board governs its school in a way that will enable an effective learning community to flourish and an evidenced-based improvement-focused culture to be maintained.

149. Boards provide the overall direction for the assessment policy through the policy and resourcing decisions they make as governors. Boards approve the overall assessment policy on the advice of the school leaders and any additional advice they seek. Boards should work with school leaders to ensure that the decisions they make will enable effective assessment to be embedded in daily practice for the benefit of learning for every student in the school.

150. Each year, boards set achievement targets as part of a continuous improvement programme to improve teaching and assessment practices, build assessment capability and consistency of judgment, and increase student outcomes for the benefit of each and every student. Based on the rich set of information gathered, boards report to the Ministry of Education against their targets to show how their school is performing as a learning community.

#### **Learning Schools are schools that comprise interconnected learning classrooms and where:**

- improved and more consistent student achievement outcomes are linked to improved *assessment for learning* practices and beliefs;
- school leaders understand the special characteristics of their student populations and target assessment practice accordingly;
- school leaders use qualitative and quantitative assessment information to plan for continuous improvement in teaching and assessment practice and to ensure resources are targeted where most needed to encourage and support better student learning;
- school leaders provide appropriate opportunities for professional learning as guided by their supervision and mentoring of teachers;
- school leaders model organisational learning and encourage and support teachers to share information and engage in professional evidence-based dialogue;
- boards understand the special nature of their school community and what this means for their policy and practice as governors.

## 5. A Learning Sector

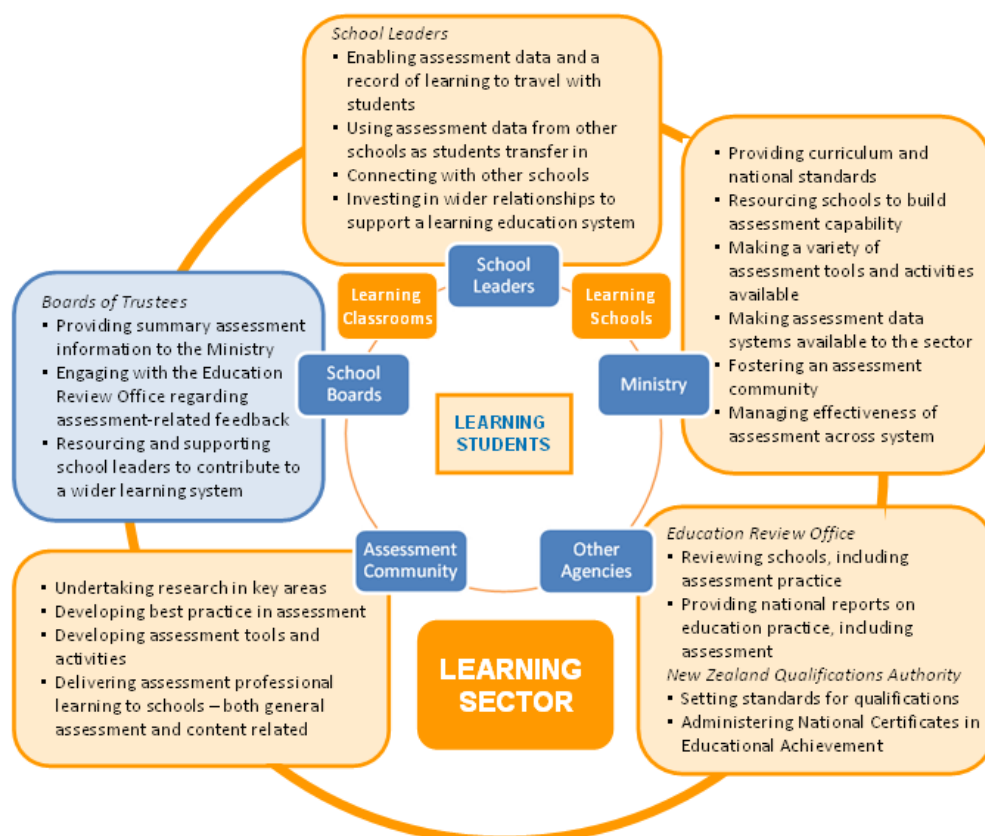
**Learning schools + sector agencies + wider assessment community = learning sector**

Key elements of a learning sector:

- quality interactions and relationships that are student-centred and respect and support diverse backgrounds, experiences, cultures, and need;
- a continuous process of inquiry, decision-making, adaptation, and transformation undertaken by assessment-capable participants who understand their role in the learning process and whose contribution is valued;
- decision-making guided by a range of evidence from multiple sources;
- a recognition that the curriculum underpins assessment and that this should be reflected in the interaction between assessment, teaching, and learning;
- participants model organisational learning.

### 5.1 Overview

**Figure 10: Roles in a Learning Sector**



151. System-wide change requires a learning sector. A learning sector comprises interconnected learning communities (learning schools with learning classrooms supported by a learning assessment community and learning sector agencies) that work together within a sector-wide community of learning to support and encourage system-wide improvement for the benefit of each and every student.
152. The key contributors to maintaining a learning sector are sector agencies, school communities of learning (led by school boards and school leaders), and the wider assessment community.

A learning sector comprises interconnected learning communities which work together as a sector-wide community of learning to support and encourage system-wide improvement for the benefit of all students.

## 5.2 School Boards of Trustees and School Leaders

153. School boards of trustees and school leaders should focus on ensuring effective teaching within their school that is matched to the requirements of their community. In doing this with regard to assessment, they are supported by a wider assessment community and sector agencies such as the Ministry of Education, the Education Review Office, and, where relevant, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority.
154. While boards of trustees are specifically in place to represent their communities, they also need to support initiatives that contribute to system-wide improvements across the sector. This will include resourcing school leaders to contribute to wider system effectiveness and establishing effective interfaces with other schools. School leaders should interact with other schools, the wider assessment community, and the sector agencies so they can support sector learning and system improvement.
155. School leaders and trustees should see their learning school as part of a wider network of learning schools. While individual learning classrooms within schools are, to some extent, distinct and unique learning communities, they are also interconnected contributors to, and members of, a wider learning school. Similarly, learning schools are, to some extent, distinct and unique learning communities, but they are also interconnected contributors to, and members of, a wider learning sector.
156. Depending on the nature of the school, they will receive students from some schools and students will pass on to other schools. Students will also transition within schools and from one setting to another. A learning sector should concern itself with the following issues:
- Assessment information should travel without difficulty from a student's previous school and to their next school, from setting to setting and from class to class, and enable ready access to useful assessment information. This will speed any interventions required and ensure early adaptation to any special requirements.
  - Assessment information that travels with a student will be of most benefit to the student's ongoing learning if it contains information that is complete, rich, and usable by a teacher in another context. To this end, it should assess against progressions and expectations connected to the curriculum, be supported by a wider record of learning, and take into account a range of information that enables a comprehensive picture of the student.
  - Assessment information transfer should be initiated by the school and not rely on the student or family having to prompt specific action.

157. School leaders should seek to:
- implement systems that support the interchange of information with other schools and between settings and classrooms; and
  - develop quality relationships and interactions with other schools, including schools they receive students from or send students to, to enable information to be shared in a collegial and collaborative way.
158. This will be for the purpose of enabling the smooth transition of student achievement and progress information when students move from class to class, setting to setting, or school to school. Additionally, it will be for the purpose of undertaking professional evidenced-based discussions focused on sharing and building effective practice and developing assessment capability.

### **5.3 Assessment Community**

159. It is important that the wider assessment community work together with schools and sector agencies as participants in the sector community of learning. This helps to build sector coherence and integrity, which in turn will contribute to system-wide improvement.
160. The assessment community includes: initial teacher education providers; in-service teacher education providers; assessment and content specialists; writers of education materials; academics undertaking research and advisory roles, who interact with teachers, school leaders, and/or sector agency personnel and iwi groups who work with kura in the Māori-medium sector.
161. The community contributes in a number of ways, including:
- working with schools and sector agencies to increase assessment capability – including assessment-specific and content-related assessment knowledge and skills
  - contributing research or expert advice to decision-making processes in relation to initial teacher education, in-service learning and development, and policy, monitoring, and evaluation frameworks.

### **5.4 Central Agencies**

162. Central agencies need to be assessment capable if they are to use assessment information to support the learning and achievement of students and establish policy, support, monitoring, and evaluation frameworks that encourage and support boards, schools leaders, and teachers to establish school and classroom environments focused on improved outcomes for every student.
163. One of the key ways that central agencies can build their assessment capability is by engaging with each other and with the wider assessment community. Sector agencies must clearly understand the place and value of assessment and how to use assessment information to inform their own decision-making.

#### **Education Review Office**

164. The Education Review Office supports the improvement of assessment practices and capability across the sector through its role of reviewing and reporting on the performance of the system.

165. An individual school's assessment capability is evaluated through ERO's school review process, which places student achievement at the centre and evaluates:
- how well the school's assessment processes provide students with information about how well they are achieving and what they need to do to improve their achievement
  - how well teachers are using assessment information to focus their teaching and make judgments about students' achievement, and rates of progress
  - how well assessment information is shared with parents so that they can understand their child's progress, achievement, and their next learning steps
  - how well school leaders use assessment information to build capability and sustain improvement across the school
  - how well trustees use assessment information as part of self review to identify priorities to strategically guide improvements.
166. ERO's national evaluations add value to the education sector by either directly reporting on the achievement of groups of students within the system (such as Māori and Pasifika students), or evaluating how well assessment is used in different areas of the curriculum across schools nationally.

#### **New Zealand Qualifications Authority**

167. The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) is the lead agency for assessment for qualifications. The agency administers the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF), including the National Certificates of Educational Achievement (NCEA) and NZ Scholarship undertaken by secondary students.
168. NZQA ensures that national qualifications are accepted as credible and robust, nationally and internationally, so that they are of assistance to students after they leave the schooling system, as they seek to pursue chosen endeavours and contribute to NZ society. This includes:
- overseeing the setting of standards for qualifications in secondary schools;
  - managing the external assessment of secondary school students;
  - moderating the quality of internal assessment activities associated with assessments that directly result in the award of credits towards a qualification, providing appropriate feedback, investigating apparent discrepancies and, where necessary, providing assistance to schools to support improvement;
  - maintaining students' electronic Record of Achievement (a lifelong record of all standards and qualifications achieved for each student);
  - producing Managing National Assessment (MNA) reports (analysis of each school's capability to assess against NCEA standards) to each school to inform improvement in the development and maintenance of robust qualification assessment systems;
  - monitoring student results over time to consider what improvements can be made to policy and practice.

## Ministry of Education

169. The nation-wide policy, monitoring and evaluation framework inevitably influences the governance, management, and behaviours in schools. It can either help or hinder the development of interconnected learning communities, depending on its design. It is important that the framework encourages and rewards constructive sharing of information within and between learning communities at all levels of the system (classroom, school, sector). This requires a high-trust environment that values the contribution of all participants and focuses on building assessment-capable, internally-accountable people.

### **Ministry Responsibilities**

- provision of quality advice to Government;
- provision of curriculum and national standards;
- resourcing and guiding the building of assessment capability in schools;
- making a variety of assessment tools and activities available;
- making assessment data systems available to the sector;
- fostering an assessment community;
- managing effectiveness of assessment across schooling system.

170. The Ministry of Education has a special role in ensuring the coherence and integrity of the overall learning system. This will involve an assessment cycle of setting goals, monitoring the effectiveness of the sector, and assessing progress, deciding what to do next to improve student learning, making interventions as required, and setting next goals.

171. This mirrors the process of inquiry, decision-making, adaptation, and transformation undertaken by learning classrooms (teachers, students, and parents) and learning schools (learning classrooms, school leaders, and boards of trustees) and utilises multiple sources of evidence to ensure that decisions are evidence-based and made after consideration of a comprehensive range of information.

### **Provision of Quality Advice to the Government of the day**

172. The overall policy, support, monitoring, and evaluation framework established centrally needs to be shaped in a way that will encourage and support schools to establish appropriate school-wide policy and practices so that school communities of learning and classroom communities of learning can flourish. This necessitates policy and practice that encourage and support teachers to establish classroom practices that will make a positive difference to student outcomes for each and every student.

173. The Ministry is responsible for providing quality free and frank advice to its Minister and Government, based on available evidence, about the overall environment needed to promote a continuous cycle of improvement throughout the system. This requires an environment which will encourage and support schools and teachers to work towards extending the learning of all students as far as possible and in the most appropriate way.



### ***Provision of Curriculum, National Standards, Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori, and NCEA achievement standards***

174. The Ministry is responsible for shaping the national curriculum, in consultation with the learning sector. It is also responsible for signposts such as progressions and standards that support the curriculum and the achievement standards that students meet in order to be awarded credits towards NCEA qualifications. The Ministry will, therefore, continue to monitor and review the effectiveness of the national curriculum, the National Standards, Ngā Whanaketanga Rumaki Māori, and other signposts that guide teaching and learning within and across the curriculum learning areas. It will also review the NCEA achievement standards and work in conjunction with the NZQA to ensure the integrity of the qualifications system. The Ministry will ensure that assessment and professional learning around assessment is aligned to the requirements of the national curriculum and the signposts and standards related to it. The Ministry will monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum and standards in supporting good *assessment for learning* practices.

### ***Building Assessment Capability in Schools and Ensuring Availability of a Variety of Tools and Resources***

175. The Ministry will support professional learning to increase teacher capability in *assessment for learning* across multiple curriculum areas, the development and use of effective in-classroom assessment, and the development of learning partnerships with students. This professional learning will be integrated into pre-service and in-service programmes and aligned with other professional learning taking place. The capability of pre-service and in-service providers will also be monitored.
176. The Ministry will support school leaders through the availability of assessment-related advice and guidance and resources such as assessment tools and curriculum exemplars as they seek to implement good assessment practices supported by tools that provide valid and reliable information about rates of learning.
177. The Ministry will monitor the effectiveness of its spending on professional learning for assessment to ensure that it supports equity of access for students most at risk, that it increases the assessment capability of teachers and schools, and that it achieves value for money.
178. The Ministry will support schools with advice and guidance to help them in building assessment capability within their school and parent and whānau community.
179. The Ministry will continue to support boards of trustees in receiving formal training in assessment in a way that is integrated into other programmes and addresses their particular needs.

### ***Making Assessment Data Systems Available***

180. The Ministry will work with the sector and information systems suppliers to facilitate the availability of data systems that meet the assessment needs of schools.

### ***Fostering an Assessment Community***

181. The Ministry will facilitate the development of an active assessment community so that the sector is supported in good practice and in building its capability. In addition, interaction between sector agencies and the wider assessment community will enable the agencies to retain access to advice to support assessment related policies and programmes and specific interventions.

### ***Managing Effectiveness of Assessment across the System***

182. While learning occurs in a variety of contexts, most teaching occurs in the classroom. The interactions between students and teachers in the classroom are therefore central to the information model. Information gathered and disseminated is ultimately focused on improving outcomes in the classroom.
183. Assessment information consists of *quantitative* and *qualitative data*. The nature and content of the information will differ depending on the immediate purpose for its collection and the level of the sector at which it is collected. A range of rich assessment data will be captured and shared at the school-level. Subsets of information will be made available with appropriate qualitative and quantitative context to other agencies in the education system to enable them to fulfil their roles.
184. The Ministry will use summary data from schools and the data collected through the existing research programmes – both national and international – to determine the effectiveness of assessment across the sector. The Ministry will continue to commission independent research to determine the effectiveness of its interventions, the overall coherence of the school education system, and the value for money achieved by its investments.
185. The Ministry will publish the results of targeted research as it relates to the effectiveness of the education system. The information published will include full contextual information so that the true meaning of the information can be reflected upon and applied as we seek to increase student outcomes across all students.
186. Reflection on information about student performance, coupled with priorities identified by school communities and expert advice from the wider assessment community, enables sector agencies to decide how best to co-ordinate available support, provide appropriate advice, and make appropriate policy and resource allocation decisions.
187. The Ministry maintains that the publishing of raw, highly aggregated assessment data without qualitative context information will both undermine this collegial environment and subvert the reliability of the assessment data collected. The Ministry of Education considers that it is not appropriate to compare schools on a simplistic and misleading basis. This is a consistent position held by successive Governments in New Zealand and dating back at least to the 1998 Green Paper entitled *Assessment for Success in Primary Schools*.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> *Assessment for Success in Primary Schools* pages 25-26

**A learning sector is a schooling sector that comprises interconnected learning communities (learning schools with learning classrooms supported by a learning assessment community and learning sector agencies) where:**

- all parts of the system work together coherently, and with integrity, to produce measurable increases in student achievement;
- evidence of student learning is communicated across and between schools shown by assessment and record of learning information following students in useful and accessible form and being used to smooth the transition of students between schools to improve student learning;
- continuous improvement approaches and attitudes with regard to student progress are becoming the norm across the sector;
- assessment information is available and usable at each part of the system, from student/parent and whānau through school to sector;
- school leaders understand their school as one part of a wider schooling system that is learning and working together to improve student outcomes.

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